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DRAMATIC LYRICS

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY



The Pied Piper

(Drawing by Willy Pogany)

"Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,
Brown rats, black rats, gray rats, tawny rats,
Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,
Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,
Cocking tails and pricking whiskers,
Families by tens and dozens,
Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives—
Followed the Piper for their lives."

—The Pied Piper of Hamelin.

Robert Browning's Complete Works

VOLUME IV



1104

NEW YORK
FRED DeFAU & COMPANY
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DRAMATIC LYRICS

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY

BY

ROBERT BROWNING

From the Author's Revised Text

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY BY

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INTRODUCTIONS AND NOTES BY CHARLOTTE PORTER AND HELEN A. CLARKE

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INTRODUCTION

THE "Dramatic Lyrics," as finally arranged by the poet, include selections from the poems originally printed under the same title in 1842, poems printed in 1845 as "Dramatic Romances and Lyrics," and poems from the volume of 1855, entitled "Men and Women." Their composition thus ranges over a period of about ten or fifteen years, and in them may be seen the development of the poet's genius in the lighter forms of verse.

With the complicated philosophy of "Paracelsus" and "Sordello," and the complex development and interplay of the characters in the dramas, these poems form a strong contrast. The poet is no longer a dweller upon the heights whence he looks abroad upon life in all the vastness of its social and universal relations. He has come "down amid men" and caught their simple moods and feelings. He views them at closer range; hence he cannot so easily concentrate upon them the innumerable rays of thought forever scintillating from his alert mind and flooding many of his subjects with a brilliancy of allusion at times confusing. The effect so produced is one of artistic reticence, a positive gain in power, while the possibilities are enlarged of giving each piece its own peculiar tone and accent, and making of it a clear-cut individualized work of art.

The fertility of the poet's imagination has sufficient outlet in the variety of the themes and moods

he has presented in this comparatively small group of poems. His artistic sympathy enters into the spirit of the songs of the loyal cavaliers, hurling their scornful darts at "Pym and his Carls," or the irritable soul of the envious priest in the "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister," snarling at the exasperatingly benign brother Lawrence, with an appreciation of their points of view as keen as that when he portrays what must have been to him the thoroughly congenial nature of the devoted husband in "By the Fire-side." He can blaze with the fire and enthusiasm of "Through the Metidja to Abd-el-Kadr," a veritable translation into verse of the physical exhilaration and excitement of the fanatical Mohammedan's ride, or he can feel and make us feel the anguish and indignation of the wronged girl in "The Confessional." Such monologues as this and the "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister" show Browning's skill in this form to the best advantage. Not only does the speaker in the poem reveal himself, but indirectly we get glimpses of the other characters who take part in the crises, and, furthermore, there is a distinctive atmosphere which belongs to special planes of social culture. We know Brother Lawrence as well as we know the snarling priest, the sly priest in "The Confessional" as well as we do the girl. Bigotry and a slackness of morals, hardly compatible with priestly professions, yet too often characteristic of the mediæval church, are by dexterous innuendoes brought vividly to mind in the first, while all the iniquities of the Spanish inquisitorial methods loom up in the second.

Not less interesting for these qualities are "A Toccata of Galuppi's," where we are made ac-

quainted with the Toccata, with the man who plays it, and, through his power of associating the music with the time that gave it birth, a perfect and dainty mosaic of the gay life of degenerate Venice in the eighteenth century. In "Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha" the character of the fugue and the character of the organist are analyzed, while by indirection a clever criticism of a phase in musical development is implied.

There are also poems in this group that do not belong to any especial time or place. They are generally love poems, and reflect moods of love sufficiently universal in their nature to have been experienced by any one; though the essential delicacy and refinement displayed in them mark them as the love-expressions of personalities too highly developed and spiritualized to belong to any but the nineteenth century. The perfect reciprocity of love in "Love among the Ruins" indulges in no hyperbolical praises of the beloved one; there is merely the consciousness that such love as theirs is a more valuable possession than any glory or power earth has bestowed upon its greatest. In "My Star" the lover rejoices because to him alone has the beloved one opened her soul. In "Song" the lover would have others praise her whom he loves. He must reverence her in silence. Even the worldly society man of "A Pretty Woman" decides to respect the shallow woman, rather than be the means of lowering her womanhood, by amusing himself with her beauty. And where before this era are to be found lovers who take disappointment with the calmness yet steadfastness of those in "The Lost Mistress" or "One Way of Love"? They do not rail at fate, nor bewail their woes, but

realize that their own impulse toward love can never be anything but a gain to their own souls, even if it fail of its object.

From the woman's side are "A Woman's Last Word" and "Any Wife to Any Husband," both breathing that spirit of utter renunciation of self in love of which women are capable. A long stride in the development of womanly altruism is made from the jealous revengefulness of the woman in the "Laboratory" to the understanding sympathy for a weaker nature of the woman in "Any Wife to Any Husband."

Music, art, Italy, and religion — subjects which have a peculiar fascination over Browning's genius — are all represented in this collection of Lyrics. For the purpose of study, these and others on the same subject may well be classified into groups illustrative of successive stages in the development of art, music, Italian life, or religion. At the same time it must not be forgotten that a character-portrait is usually the central fact of the poem. "Old Pictures in Florence," given in this volume, is, however, a notable exception. It is simply a bit of versified art criticism giving voice to the poet's own preferences for early Christian art over Greek art. The spiritual aspiration of pure souls transcending mean or suffering bodies arouses his artistic enthusiasm as the perfection of beauty in Greek form cannot do. The poet pours forth his learning and opinions on the subject in a chatty, conversational style as he looks at Florence from the gateway of his Villa.

No finer poem on a religious subject has come from the pen of the poet than "Saul." It combines with a wonderfully dramatic and imaginative pres-

entation of the Biblical scene of Saul's comforting by David, an interpretation of the Hebrew standpoint which is perfectly in accordance with recent Jewish scholarship. In it is brought out the transitional phase from a belief in a material immortality through family or the persistence of deeds to a belief in a spiritual and individual immortality through the prophetic intuition of David. This power of prophecy, as understood by a Jewish writer of the standing of Darmesteter, is the evolving intuition of the race concentred in men of unusual intellect, who, by their vivid perception of new ideals, carry the race forward. Just such a prophet has Browning made of David, and to his prophetic insight he has added the lovely fancies and artistic insight of the poet.

Unless the definition of a lyric be stretched, there is a number of poems in this group whose only right to the title is based upon the fact that they are rhymed. Many of them suggest speech rather than song, and might more fitly be termed dramatic episodes. On the other hand, there are enough with the true lyrical ring to save Browning from the charge sometimes made against him that he could not write a lyric. "Home Thoughts from Abroad," "My Star," many of the love lyrics, "Cavalier Tunes," "How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix," while they do not exactly sing themselves as the Elizabethan lyrics do, yet set themselves well to modern developments in music, which is itself not so lyrical as it was in the days of Elizabeth.

If there are some that cannot properly be called lyrical, there is none that does not delight by its skilful rythmical and rhyming effects, often sug-

gestive of the movement of the thought, as in "Through the Metidja to Abd-el-Kadr," where we seem to hear the persistent, steady trot of the horse, or in "Meeting at Night" and "Parting at Morning," where the rhymes are arranged to imitate a wave-like motion, and the thought rises to a climax in the middle of the stanza, falling away again at the end. These poems will all repay study on this score. Of the usual ornamentation of verse in metaphor and simile and allusion, there will be found surprisingly little. The allusions are generally drawn from some source specially pertinent to the subject, as the musical allusions in the musical poems and the art allusions in "Old Pictures in Florence." When a metaphor or comparison is used, it is always with striking effect. The general impression, however, is that in these poems Browning gets his poetical effects more by the arrangement of his words into rhythmical cadences than by rhetorical artifices.

The "Dramatic Romances," also enriched by some of the poems originally printed in "Men and Women," and a few from the "Lyrics," as first printed, include some of Browning's finest and most characteristic work. In several of them the poet displays his familiarity with the life and spirit of the Renaissance, — a period portrayed by him with a fidelity more real than history; for he enters into the feelings that give rise to action, while the historian is busied only with the results growing out of the moving force of feeling.

The egotism of the Ferrara husband outraged at the gentle wife because she is as gracious toward those who rendered her small courtesies, and seemed as thankful to them as she was to him for

his gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name, opens up for inspection the heart of a husband at a time when men exercised complete control over their wives, and could satisfy their jealous, selfish instincts by any cruel methods they chose to adopt, with no one to say them "nay." The highly developed artistic sense shown by this husband is not incompatible with his consummate selfishness and cruelty, as many tales of that time might be brought forward to illustrate. The husband in "The Statue and the Bust" belongs to the same type, and the situation there is the inevitable outcome of a civilization in which women were not consulted as to whom they would marry, and naturally often fell a prey to love if it should come to them afterwards. Weakness of will in the case of the lovers in this poem wrecked their lives; for they were not strong enough to follow either duty or love. Another glimpse is caught of this period when husbands and brothers and fathers meted out what they considered injustice to the women "In a Gondola." "The Grammarian's Funeral" gives also an aspect of Renaissance life, — the fervor for learning characteristic of the earlier days of the Renaissance when devoted pedants, as Arthur Symons says in referring to this poem, "broke ground in the restoration to the modern world of the civilization and learning of ancient Greece and Rome." Again, "The Heretic's Tragedy" and "Holy-Cross Day" picture most vividly the methods resorted to by the dying church in its attempts to keep control of the souls of a humanity seething toward religious tolerance.

With only a small space at command, it is difficult to decide on the poems to be touched upon,

especially where there is not one but would repay prolonged attention, due no less to the romantic interest of the stories, the marvellous penetration into human motives, the grasp of historical atmospheres, than to the originality and perfection of their artistry.

A word must be said of "The Flight of the Duchess" and "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came," both poems which have been productive of many commentaries, and both holding their own amid the bray of critics as unique and beautiful specimens of poetic art. Certainly no two poems could be chosen to show wider diversity in the poet's genius than these.

The story told by the huntsman in "The Flight of the Duchess" is interesting enough simply as a story, but the manner of telling it is inimitable. One can see before him the devoted, kindly man, somewhat clumsy of speech, as indicated by the rough rhymes, and characteristically drawing his illustrations from the calling he follows. Keen in his critical observation of the Duke and other members of the household, he, nevertheless, has a tender appreciation of the difficulties of the young Duchess in this unloving, artificial environment.

When the Gypsy Queen sings her song through his memory of it, the rhymes and rhythm take on a befitting harmoniousness and smoothness contrasting finely with the remainder of the poem.

By means of this song, moreover, the horizon is enlarged beyond the immediate ken of the huntsman. The race-instinct, which has so strong a hold upon the Gypsies, is exalted into a wondrous sort of love which carries everything before it. This loving reality is also set over against the unlov-

ing artificiality of the first part of the poem. The temptation is too strong for the love-starved little Duchess, and even the huntsman and Jacinth come under her hypnotic spell.

Very different in effect is "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came." The one, rich in the play of human emotion, couched in the simple language of reality; the other, a symbolic picture of the struggle and aspiration of the soul. Interpreters have tried to pin this latter poem down to the limits of an allegory, and find a specific meaning for every phrase and picture, but it has too much the quality of the modern symbolistic writing to admit of any treatment so prosaic. In this respect it resembles music. Each mind will draw from it an interpretation suited to its own attitude and experiences. Reduced to the simplest possible lines of interpretation, it symbolizes the inevitable fate which drives a truth-seeking soul to see the falsity of ideals once thought absolute, yet in the face of the ruin of those ideals courage toward the continuance of aspiration is never for a moment lost.

As a bit of art, it is strikingly imaginative, and suggests the picture-quality of the tapestried horse, which Browning himself says was the chief inspiration of the poem. It is a fine example of the way in which the "strange and winged" fancy of the poet may take its flight from so simple an object as this tapestried horse, evidently a sorry beast too, in its needled presentment, or the poetic impulse would not have expressed itself in the vindictive, "I never saw a horse I hated so."

The concluding poems in this volume, "Christmas-Eve" and "Easter-Day," are characteristic presentations of religious problems. To harmonize the

absolute and the relative — in other words, the divine and the human points of view — is a puzzle over which Browning works more or less all through his life, and which in "Ferishtah's Fancies" receives its most mature treatment. In "Christmas-Eve" the struggle is to harmonize individual, sectarian ways of worshipping God, — each sect thinking it has the whole truth, — with an ideal of God as a being whose sympathies are open to ward all manners of seeking him. What, then, should be the attitude of the human mind toward methods of worship utterly distasteful to it? The conclusion is that every one should recognize that the truth of worship is in the underlying desire toward God, and not in the form of its manifestation. On the other hand, to each mind its own method is absolutely true, because it is the only form in which the underlying truth can become a reality to him.

This bald statement of the gist of the philosophy in the poem can give no idea of the wealth of observation, knowledge, and fancy in which the poet has clothed it. There is the weaving together of dramatic pictures of various phases of religious worship, — the mean poverty of the dissenting chapel, so humorously portrayed, contrasting with the splendor of St. Peter's, and the gentle, spiritualized intellectuality of the German professor, — a thread of personal feeling in regard to each of these forms; a thread of thoughtful criticism; and, penetrating and encompassing all, the intuitional perception symbolized in the vision of Christ and his flowing garments, now folding the speaker about, now snatched away from him, as thought weakens his grasp. The completed effect is one of great complexity and beauty.

"Easter-Day" centers the discussion more particularly upon the basis of the poet's or speaker's own faith. His doubts are wrestled over in company with a friend until the fifteenth stanza is reached, when he recounts what purports to be a vision. The style up to this point is somewhat commonplace and unpoetical, but from here rushes on with a splendor befitting the revelation of divine love as opposed to the doubt of the first part.

In the vision the poet's soul is taught, through his choice of earth, that all the power and beauty and glory of earth — nature, art, science, thought — fail completely to satisfy; but when love is revealed, then God is revealed, and it is realized that love intertwines all beauty and power. Then the soul is no longer satisfied with earth, but aspires to become one with the infinite love beyond; and whether the story of the supernatural revelation of divine love be true or not, matters little; for through man's intuition divine love has been revealed.

This is a note frequently touched upon by Browning, but nowhere has it received finer treatment than in this Easter-Day vision.

CHARLOTTE PORTER.
HELEN A. CLARKE.

DRAMATIC LYRICS

184— 185—

CAVALIER TUNES

1842

I. MARCHING ALONG

I

KENTISH Sir Byng stood for his King,
Bidding the crop-headed Parliament swing:
And, pressing a troop unable to stoop
And see the rogues flourish and honest folk droop,
Marched them along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

II

God for King Charles! Pym and such carles
To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous parles!
Cavaliers, up! Lips from the cup,
Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor sup
Till you 're —

CHORUS. *Marching along, fifty-score strong,*
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

III

Hampden to hell, and his obsequies' knell
Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry as well!

England, good cheer! Rupert is near!
Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here
CHORUS. *Marching along, fifty-score strong,*
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song?

IV

Then, God for King Charles! Pym and his snarls
To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent carles!
Hold by the right, you double your might;
So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the fight,
CHORUS. *March we along, fifty-score strong,*
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song!

II. GIVE A ROUSE

I

King Charles, and who 'll do him right now?
King Charles, and who 's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here 's, in hell's despite now,
King Charles!

II

Who gave me the goods that went since?
Who raised me the house that sank once?
Who helped me to gold I spent since?
Who found me in wine you drank once?
CHORUS. *King Charles, and who 'll do him right now?*
King Charles, and who 's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here 's, in hell's despite now,
King Charles!

III

To whom used my boy George quaff else,
By the old fool's side that begot him?
For whom did he cheer and laugh else,
While Noll's damned troopers shot him?

CHORUS. *King Charles, and who 'll do him right now?*
King Charles, and who 's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here 's, in hell's despite now,
King Charles!

III. BOOT AND SADDLE

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!
Rescue my castle before the hot day
Brightens to blue from its silvery gray,

CHORUS. *Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*

II

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you 'd say;
Many 's the friend there, will listen and pray
"God's luck to gallants that strike up the lay —

CHORUS. "*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*"

III

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,
Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Roundheads' array:
Who laughs, "Good fellows ere this, by my fay,

CHORUS. "*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*"

IV

Who? My wife Gertrude; that, honest and gay,
Laughs when you talk of surrendering, "Nay!
I 've better counsellors; what counsel they?
CHORUS. "*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*"

THE LOST LEADER

1845

JUST for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a riband to stick in his coat —
Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
Lost all the others she lets us devote;
They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,
So much was theirs who so little allowed:
How all our copper had gone for his service!
Rags — were they purple, his heart had been proud!
We that had loved him so, followed him, honored him,
Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,
Made him our pattern to live and to die!
Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
Burns, Shelley, were with us, — they watch from their graves!
He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,
— He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!

II

We shall march prospering, — not thro' his presence;
Songs may inspirit us, — not from his lyre;
Deeds will be done, — while he boasts his quiescence,

Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire:
Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,
One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,
One more devils'-triumph and sorrow for angels,
One wrong more to man, one more insult to God!
Life's night begins: let him never come back to us!
There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,
Forced praise on our part — the glimmer of twilight,
Never glad confident morning again!
Best fight on well, for we taught him — strike gallantly,
Menace our heart ere we master his own;
Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,
Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne!

"HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX"

[16—]

1845

I

I SPRANG to the stirrup, and Joris, and he;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;
"Good speed!" cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew;
"Speed!" echoed the wall to us galloping through;
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

II

Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place;
I turned in my saddle and made its girth tight,

Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right,
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

III

'T was moonset at starting; but while we drew near
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear;
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see;
At Düffeld, 't was morning as plain as could be;
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-chime,
So, Joris broke silence with, "Yet there is time!"

IV

At Aershot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,
And against him the cattle stood black every one,
To stare thro' the mist at us galloping past,
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,
With resolute shoulders, each butting away
The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray:

V

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent back
For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track;
And one eye's black intelligence, — ever that glance
O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance!
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on.

VI

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned; and cried Joris, "Stay spur!
Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault 's not in her,

We 'll remember at Aix" — for one heard the quick wheeze
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering knees,
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

VII

So, we were left galloping, Joris and I,
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky;
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like chaff;
Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,
And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is in sight!"

VIII

"How they 'll greet us!" — and all in a moment his roan
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone;
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

IX

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all,
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,
Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without peer;
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or good,
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

X

And all I remember is — friends flocking round
As I sat with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground;
And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,
As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,
Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)
Was no more than his due who brought good news from Ghent.

THROUGH THE METIDJA TO ABD-EL-KADR

1842

I

As I ride, as I ride,
With a full heart for my guide,
So its tide rocks my side,
As I ride, as I ride,
That, as I were double-eyed,
He, in whom our Tribes confide,
Is descried, ways untried
As I ride, as I ride.

II

As I ride, as I ride
To our Chief and his Allied,
Who dares chide my heart's pride
As I ride, as I ride?
Or are witnesses denied —
Through the desert waste and wide
Do I glide unespied
As I ride, as I ride?

III

As I ride, as I ride,
When an inner voice has cried,
The sand slide, nor abide
(As I ride, as I ride)
O'er each visioned homicide
That came vaunting (has he lied?)
To reside — where he died,
As I ride, as I ride.

IV

As I ride, as I ride,
Ne'er has spur my swift horse plied,
Yet his hide, streaked and pied,
As I ride, as I ride,
Shows where sweat has sprung and dried,
— Zebra-footed, ostrich-thighed —
How has vied stride with stride
As I ride, as I ride!

V

As I ride, as I ride,
Could I loose what Fate has tied,
Ere I pried, she should hide
(As I ride, as I ride)
All that 's meant me — satisfied
When the Prophet and the Bride
Stop veins I 'd have subside
As I ride, as I ride!

NATIONALITY IN DRINKS

1845

I

My heart sank with our Claret-flask,
Just now, beneath the heavy sedges
That serve this pond's black face for mask
And still at yonder broken edges
O' the hole, where up the bubbles glisten,
After my heart I look and listen.

II

Our laughing little flask, compelled
Thro' depth to depth more bleak and shady;
As when, both arms beside her held,
Feet straightened out, some gay French lady
Is caught up from life's light and motion,
And dropped into death's silent ocean!

Up jumped Tokay on our table,
Like a pygmy castle-warder,
Dwarfish to see, but stout and able,
Arms and accoutrements all in order;
And fierce he looked North, then, wheeling South,
Blew with his bugle a challenge to Drouth,
Cocked his flap-hat with the tosspot-feather,
Twisted his thumb in his red moustache,
Jingled his huge brass spurs together,
Tightened his waist with its Buda sash,
And then, with an impudence naught could abash
Shrugged his hump-shoulder, to tell the beholder,
For twenty such knaves he should laugh but the bolder:
And so, with his sword-hilt gallantly jutting,

And dexter-hand on his haunch abutting,
Went the little man, Sir Ausbruch, strutting!

Here 's to Nelson's memory!
'T is the second time that I, at sea,
Right off Cape Trafalgar here,
Have drunk it deep in British Beer.
Nelson for ever — any time
Am I his to command in prose or rhyme!
Give me of Nelson only a touch,
And I save it, be it little or much:
Here 's one our Captain gives, and so
Down at the word, by George, shall it go!
He says that at Greenwich they point the beholder
To Nelson's coat, "still with tar on the shoulder:
For he used to lean with one shoulder digging,
Jigging, as it were, and zig-zag-zigging
Up against the mizen-rigging!"

GARDEN FANCIES

1845

I. THE FLOWER'S NAME

I

HERE 's the garden she walked across,
Arm in my arm, such a short while since:
Hark, now I push its wicket, the moss
Hinders the hinges and makes them wince!
She must have reached this shrub ere she turned,
As back with that murmur the wicket swung;
For she laid the poor snail, my chance foot spurned,
To feed and forget it the leaves among.

II

Down this side of the gravel-walk
 She went while her robe's edge brushed the box:
And here she paused in her gracious talk
 To point me a moth on the milk-white phlox.
Roses, ranged in valiant row,
 I will never think that she passed you by!
She loves you noble roses, I know;
 But yonder, see, where the rock-plants lie!

III

This flower she stopped at, finger on lip,
 Stooped over, in doubt, as settling its claim;
Till she gave me, with pride to make no slip,
 Its soft meandering Spanish name:
What a name! Was it love or praise?
 Speech half-asleep or song half-awake?
I must learn Spanish, one of these days,
 Only for that slow sweet name's sake.

IV

Roses, if I live and do well,
 I may bring her, one of these days,
To fix you fast with as fine a spell,
 Fit you each with his Spanish phrase;
But do not detain me now; for she lingers
 There, like sunshine over the ground,
And ever I see her soft white fingers
 Searching after the bud she found.

V

Flower, you Spaniard, look that you grow not,
 Stay as you are and be loved for ever!

Bud, if I kiss you 't is that you blow not:
Mind, the shut pink mouth opens never!
For while it pouts, her fingers wrestle,
Twinkling the audacious leaves between,
Till round they turn and down they nestle —
Is not the dear mark still to be seen?

VI

Where I find her not, beauties vanish;
Whither I follow her, beauties flee;
Is there no method to tell her in Spanish
June 's twice June since she breathed it with me?
Come, bud, show me the least of her traces,
Treasure my lady's lightest footfall!
— Ah, you may flout and turn up your faces —
Roses, you are not so fair after all!

II. SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS

I

Plague take all your pedants, say I!
He who wrote what I hold in my hand,
Centuries back was so good as to die,
Leaving this rubbish to cumber the land;
This, that was a book in its time,
Printed on paper and bound in leather,
Last month in the white of a matin-prime
Just when the birds sang all together.

II

Into the garden I brought it to read,
And under the arbute and laurustine
Read it, so help me grace in my need,
From title-page to closing line.

Chapter on chapter did I count,
As a curious traveller counts Stonehenge;
Added up the mortal amount;
And then proceeded to my revenge.

III

Yonder 's a plum-tree with a crevice
An owl would build in, were he but sage;
For a lap of moss, like a fine pont-levis
In a castle of the Middle Age,
Joins to a lip of gum, pure amber;
When he 'd be private, there might he spend
Hours alone in his lady's chamber:
Into this crevice I dropped our friend.

IV

Splash, went he, as under he ducked,
—At the bottom, I knew, rain-drippings stagnate:
Next, a handful of blossoms I plucked
To bury him with, my bookshelf's magnate;
Then I went in-doors, brought out a loaf,
Half a cheese, and a bottle of Chablis;
Lay on the grass and forgot the oaf
Over a jolly chapter of Rabelais.

V

Now, this morning, betwixt the moss
And gum that locked our friend in limbo,
A spider had spun his web across,
And sat in the midst with arms akimbo:
So, I took pity, for learning's sake,
And, *de profundis, accentibus lætis,*
Cantate! quoth I, as I got a rake;
And up I fished his delectable treatise.

VI

Here you have it, dry in the sun,
With all the binding all of a blister,
And great blue spots where the ink has run,
And reddish streaks that wink and glister
O'er the page so beautifully yellow:
Oh, well have the droppings played their tricks!
Did he guess how toadstools grow, this fellow?
Here 's one stuck in his chapter six!

VII

How did he like it when the live creatures
Tickled and toused and browsed him all over,
And worm, slug, eft, with serious features,
Came in, each one, for his right of trover?
— When the water-beetle with great blind deaf face
Made of her eggs the stately deposit
And the newt borrowed just so much of the preface
As tiled in the top of his black wife's closet?

VIII

All that life and fun and romping,
All that frisking and twisting and coupling,
While slowly our poor friend's leaves weres wamping
And clasps were cracking and covers suppling!
As if you had carried sour John Knox
To the play-house at Paris, Vienna or Munich,
Fastened him into a front-row box,
And danced off the ballet with trousers and tunic.

IX

Come, old martyr! What, torment enough is it?
Back to my room shall you take your sweet self.

Good-bye, mother-beetle; husband-eft, *sufficit!*
 See the snug niche I have made on my shelf!
A.'s book shall prop you up, B.'s shall cover you,
 Here 's C. to be grave with, or D. to be gay,
Any with E. on each side, and F. right over you,
 Dry-rot at ease till the Judgment-day!

SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH CLOISTER

1842

I

Gr-r-r — there go, my heart's abhorrence!
 Water your damned flower-pots, do!
If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,
 God's blood, would not mine kill you!
What? your myrtle-bush wants trimming?
 Oh, that rose has prior claims —
Needs its leaden vase filled brimming?
 Hell dry you up with its flames!

II

At the meal we sit together:
 Salve tibi! I must hear
Wise talk of the kind of weather,
 Sort of season, time of year:
Not a plenteous cork-crop: scarcely
 Dare we hope oak-galls, I doubt:
What 's the Latin name for "parsley"?
 What 's the Greek name for Swine's Snout?

III

Whew! We 'll have our platter burnished,
 Laid with care on our own shelf!
With a fire-new spoon we 're furnished,
 And a goblet for ourself,
Rinsed like something sacrificial
 Ere 't is fit to touch our chaps —
Marked with L. for our initial!
 (He-he! There his lily snaps!)

IV

Saint, forsooth! While brown Dolores
 Squats outside the Convent bank
With Sanchicha, telling stories,
 Steeping tresses in the tank,
Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horsehairs.
 — Can't I see his dead eye glow,
Bright as 't were a Barbary corsair's?
 (That is, if he 'd let it show!)

When he finishes refection,
 Knife and fork he never lays
Cross-wise, to my recollection,
 As do I, in Jesu's praise.
I the Trinity illustrate,
 Drinking watered orange-pulp —
In three sips the Arian frustrate;
 While he drains his at one gulp.

VI

Oh, those melons? If he 's able
 We 're to have a feast! so nice!

One goes to the Abbot's table,
All of us get each a slice.
How go on your flowers? None double
Not one fruit-sort can you spy?
Strange! — And I, too, at such trouble,
Keep them close-nipped on the sly!

VII

There 's a great text in Galatians,
Once you trip on it, entails
Twenty-nine distinct damnations,
One sure, if another fails:
If I trip him just a-dying,
Sure of heaven as sure can be,
Spin him round and send him flying
Off to hell, a Manichee?

VIII

Or, my scrofulous French novel
On gray paper with blunt type!
Simply glance at it, you grovel
Hand and foot in Belial's gripe:
If I double down its pages
At the woful sixteenth print,
When he gathers his green gages,
Ope a sieve and slip it in 't?

IX

Or, there 's Satan! — one might venture
Pledge one's soul to him, yet leave
Such a flaw in the indenture
As he 'd miss till, past retrieve,
Blasted lay that rose-acacia
We 're so proud of! *Hy, Zy, Hine.*

'St, there 's Vespers! *Plena gratiâ*
Ave, Virgo! Gr-r-r — you swine!

THE LABORATORY

ANCIEN RÉGIME

1845

I

Now that I, tying thy glass mask tightly,
May gaze thro' these faint smokes curling whitely,
As thou pliest thy trade in this devil's-smithy —
Which is the poison to poison her, prithee?

II

He is with her, and they know that I know
Where they are, what they do: they believe my tears flow
While they laugh, laugh at me, at me fled to the drear
Empty church, to pray God in, for them! — I am here.

III

Grind away, moisten and mash up thy paste,
Pound at thy powder, — I am not in haste!
Better sit thus, and observe thy strange things,
Than go where men wait me and dance at the King's.

IV

That in the mortar — you call it a gum?
Ah, the brave tree whence such gold oozings come!

And yonder soft phial, the exquisite blue,
Sure to taste sweetly, — is that poison too?

V

Had I but all of them, thee and thy treasures,
What a wild crowd of invisible pleasures!
To carry pure death in an earring, a casket,
A signet, a fan-mount, a filigree basket!

VI

Soon, at the King's, a mere lozenge to give,
And Pauline should have just thirty minutes to live!
But to light a pastile, and Elise with her head
And her breast and her arms and her hands, should drop dead!

VII

Quick — is it finished? The color 's too grim!
Why not soft like the phial's, enticing and dim?
Let it brighten her drink, let her turn it and stir,
And try it and taste, ere she fix and prefer!

VIII

What a drop! She 's not little, no minion like me!
That 's why she ensnared him: this never will free
The soul from those masculine eyes, — say, "no!"
To that pulse's magnificent come-and-go.

IX

For only last night, as they whispered, I brought
My own eyes to bear on her so, that I thought
Could I keep them one half minute fixed, she would fall
Shrivelled; she fell not; yet this does it all!

X

Not that I bid you spare her the pain;
Let death be felt and the proof remain:
Brand, burn up, bite into its grace —
He is sure to remember her dying face!

XI

Is it done? Take my mask off! Nay, be not morose;
It kills her, and this prevents seeing it close:
The delicate droplet, my whole fortune's fee!
If it hurts her, beside, can it ever hurt me?

XII

Now, take all my jewels, gorge gold to your fill,
You may kiss me, old man, on my mouth if you will!
But brush this dust off me, lest horror it brings
Ere I know it — next moment I dance at the King's!

THE CONFESSIONAL

[SPAIN]

1845

I

It is a lie — their Priests, their Pope,
Their Saints, their . . . all they fear or hope
Are lies, and lies — there! through my door
And ceiling, there! and walls and floor
There, lies, they lie — shall still be hurled
Till spite of them I reach the world!

II

You think Priests just and holy men!
Before they put me in this den
I was a human creature too,
With flesh and blood like one of you,
A girl that laughed in beauty's pride
Like lilies in your world outside.

III

I had a lover — shame avaunt!
This poor wrenched body, grim and gaunt,
Was kissed all over till it burned,
By lips the truest, love e'er turned
His heart's own tint: one night they kissed
My soul out in a burning mist.

IV

So, next day when the accustomed train
Of things grew round my sense again,
"That is a sin," I said: and slow
With downcast eyes to church I go,
And pass to the confession-chair,
And tell the old mild father there.

V

But when I falter Beltran's name,
"Ha?" quoth the father; "much I blame
The sin; yet wherefore idly grieve?
Despair not — strenuously retrieve!
Nay, I will turn this love of thine
To lawful love, almost divine;

VI

"For he is young, and led astray,
This Beltran, and he schemes, men say,
To change the laws of church and state;
So, thine shall be an angel's fate,
Who, ere the thunder breaks, should roll
Its cloud away and save his soul.

VII

"For, when he lies upon thy breast,
Thou mayst demand and be possessed
Of all his plans, and next day steal
To me, and all those plans reveal,
That I and every priest, to purge
His soul, may fast and use the scourge."

VIII

That father's beard was long and white,
With love and truth his brow seemed bright;
I went back, all on fire with joy,
And, that same evening, bade the boy
Tell me, as lovers should, heart-free,
Something to prove his love of me.

IX

He told me what he would not tell
For hope of heaven or fear of hell;
And I lay listening in such pride!
And, soon as he had left my side,
Tripped to the church by morning-light
To save his soul in his despite.

X

I told the father all his schemes,
Who were his comrades, what their dreams;
"And now make haste," I said, "to pray
The one spot from his soul away;
To-night he comes, but not the same
Will look!" At night he never came.

XI

Nor next night: on the after-morn,
I went forth with a strength new-born.
The church was empty; something drew
My steps into the street; I knew
It led me to the market-place:
Where, lo, on high, the father's face!

XII

That horrible black scaffold dressed,
That stapled block . . . God sink the rest!
That head strapped back, that blinding vest,
Those knotted hands and naked breast,
Till near one busy hangman pressed,
And, on the neck these arms caressed . . .

XIII

No part in aught they hope or fear!
No heaven with them, no hell! — and here,
No earth, not so much space as pens
My body in their worst of dens
But shall bear God and man my cry,
Lies — lies, again — and still, they lie!

CRISTINA

1842

I

She should never have looked at me
If she meant I should not love her!
There are plenty . . . men, you call such,
I suppose . . . she may discover
All her soul to, if she pleases,
And yet leave much as she found them:
But I 'm not so, and she knew it
When she fixed me, glancing round them.

II

What? To fix me thus meant nothing?
But I can't tell (there 's my weakness)
What her look said! — no vile cant, sure,
About "need to strew the bleakness
Of some lone shore with its pearl-seed
That the sea feels" — no "strange yearning
That such souls have, most to lavish
Where there 's chance of least returning."

III

Oh, we 're sunk enough here, God knows!
But not quite so sunk that moments,
Sure tho' seldom, are denied us,
When the spirit 's true endowments
Stand out plainly from its false ones,
And apprise it if pursuing
Or the right way or the wrong way,
To its triumph or undoing.

IV

There are flashes struck from midnights,
 There are fire-flames noondays kindle,
Whereby piled-up honors perish,
 Whereby swollen ambitions dwindle,
While just this or that poor impulse,
 Which for once had play unstifled,
Seems the sole work of a life-time
 That away the rest have trifled.

V

Doubt you if, in some such moment,
 As she fixed me, she felt clearly,
Ages past the soul existed,
 Here an age 't is resting merely,
And hence fleets again for ages,
 While the true end, sole and single,
It stops here for is, this love-way,
 With some other soul to mingle?

VI

Else it loses what it lived for,
 And eternally must lose it;
Better ends may be in prospect,
 Deeper blisses (if you choose it),
But this life's end and this love-bliss
 Have been lost here. Doubt you whether
This she felt as, looking at me,
 Mine and her souls rushed together?

VII

Oh, observe! Of course, next moment,
 The world's honors, in derision,

Trampled out the light forever:
Never fear but there 's provision
Of the devil's to quench knowledge
Lest we walk the earth in rapture!
— Making those who catch God's secret
Just so much more prize their capture!

VIII

Such am I: the secret 's mine now!
She has lost me, I have gained her;
Her soul 's mine: and thus, grown perfect,
I shall pass my life's remainder.
Life will just hold out the proving
Both our powers, alone and blended:
And then, come next life quickly!
This world's use will have been ended.

THE LOST MISTRESS

1845

I

All 's over, then: does truth sound bitter
As one at first believes?
Hark, 't is the sparrows' good-night twitter
About your cottage eaves!

II

And the leaf-buds on the vine are woolly,
I noticed that, to-day;
One day more bursts them open fully
— You know the red turns gray.

III

To-morrow we meet the same then, dearest?
May I take your hand in mine?
Mere friends are we, — well, friends the merest
Keep much that I resign:

IV

For each glance of the eye so bright and black,
Though I keep with heart's endeavor, —
Your voice, when you wish the snowdrops back,
Though it stay in my soul forever! —

V

Yet I will but say what mere friends say,
Or only a thought stronger;
I will hold your hand but as long as all may,
Or so very little longer!

EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES

1845

FAME

See, as the prettiest graves will do in time,
Our poet's wants the freshness of its prime;
Spite of the sexton's browsing horse, the sods
Have struggled through its binding osier rods;
Headstone and half-sunk footstone lean awry,
Wanting the brick-work promised by-and-by;
How the minute gray lichens, plate o'er plate,
Have softened down the crisp-cut name and date!

LOVE

So, the year 's done with!
(*Love me forever!*)
All March begun with,
April's endeavor;
May-wreaths that bound me
June needs must sever;
Now snows fall round me,
Quenching June's fever —
(*Love me forever!*)

MEETING AT NIGHT

1845

I

THE gray sea and the long black land;
And the yellow half-moon large and low;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

II

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match,
And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and fears,
Than the two hearts beating each to each!

PARTING AT MORNING

ROUND the cape of a sudden came the sea,
And the sun looked over the mountain's rim:
And straight was a path of gold for him,
And the need of a world of men for me.

SONG

1845

I

NAY but you, who do not love her,
Is she not pure gold, my mistress?
Holds earth aught — speak truth — above her?
Aught like this tress, see, and this tress,
And this last fairest tress of all,
So fair, see, ere I let it fall?

II

Because, you spend your lives in praising;
To praise, you search the wide world over:
Then why not witness, calmly gazing,
If earth holds aught — speak truth — above her?
Above this tress, and this, I touch
But cannot praise, I love so much!

A WOMAN'S LAST WORD

1855

I

Let 's contend no more, Love,
Strive nor weep:
All be as before, Love,
— Only sleep!

II

What so wild as words are?
I and thou
In debate, as birds are,
Hawk on bough!

III

See the creature stalking
While we speak!
Hush and hide the talking,
Cheek on cheek!

IV

What so false as truth is,
False to thee?
Where the serpent's tooth is
Shun the tree —

Where the apple reddens
Never pry —
Lest we lose our Edens,
Eve and I.

VI

Be a god and hold me
With a charm!
Be a man and fold me
With thine arm!

VII

Teach me, only teach, Love!
As I ought
I will speak thy speech, Love,
Think thy thought —

VIII

Meet, if thou require it,
Both demands,
Laying flesh and spirit
In thy hands.

IX

That shall be to-morrow
Not to-night:
I must bury sorrow
Out of sight:

— Must a little weep, Love,
(Foolish me!)
And so fall asleep, Love,
Loved by thee.

EVELYN HOPE

1855

I

Beautiful Evelyn Hope is dead!
Sit and watch by her side an hour.
That is her book-shelf, this her bed;
She plucked that piece of geranium-flower,
Beginning to die too, in the glass;
Little has yet been changed, I think:
The shutters are shut, no light may pass
Save two long rays thro' the hinge's chink.

II

Sixteen years old when she died!
Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name;
It was not her time to love; beside,
Her life had many a hope and aim,
Duties enough and little cares,
And now was quiet, now astir,
Till God's hand beckoned unawares, —
And the sweet white brow is all of her.

III

Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope?
What, your soul was pure and true,
The good stars met in your horoscope,
Made you of spirit, fire and dew —
And, just because I was thrice as old
And our paths in the world diverged so wide,
Each was naught to each must I be told?
We were fellow mortals, naught beside?

IV

No, indeed! for God above
Is great to grant, as mighty to make,
And creates the love to reward the love:
I claim you still, for my own love's sake!
Delayed it may be for more lives yet,
Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few:
Much is to learn, much to forget
Ere the time be come for taking you.

V

But the time will come, — at last it will,
When, Evelyn Hope, what meant (I shall say)
In the lower earth, in the years long still,
That body and soul so pure and gay?
Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,
And your mouth of your own geranium's red —
And what you would do with me, in fine,
In the new life come in the old one's stead.

VI

I have lived (I shall say) so much since then,
Given up myself so many times,
Gained me the gains of various men,
Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes;
Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope,
Either I missed or itself missed me:
And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope!
What is the issue? let us see!

VII

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while.
My heart seemed full as it could hold?

There was place and to spare for the frank young
smile,
And the red young mouth, and the hair's young gold.
So, hush, — I will give you this leaf to keep:
See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand!
There, that is our secret: go to sleep!
You will wake, and remember, and understand.

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

1855

I

WHERE the quiet-colored end of evening smiles,
Miles and miles
On the solitary pastures where our sheep
Half-asleep
Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray or stop
As they crop —
Was the site once of a city great and gay,
(So they say)
Of our country's very capital, its prince
Ages since
Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far
Peace or war.

II

Now, — the country does not even boast a tree,
As you see,
To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills
From the hills
Intersect and give a name to, (else they run
Into one)

Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires
Up like fires
O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall
Bounding all,
Made of marble, men might march on nor be pressed,
Twelve abreast.

III

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass
Never was!
Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'erspreads
And embeds
Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,
Stock or stone —
Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe
Long ago;
Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame
Struck them tame;
And that glory and that shame alike, the gold
Bought and sold.

IV

Now, — the single little turret that remains
On the plains,
By the caper overrooted, by the gourd
Overscored,
While the patching houseleek's head of blossom winks
Through the chinks —
Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time
Sprang sublime,
And a burning ring, all round, the chariots traced
As they raced,
And the monarch and his minions and his dames
Viewed the games.

V

And I know, while thus the quiet-colored eve
Smiles to leave
To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece
In such peace,
And the slopes and rills in undistinguished gray
Melt away —
That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair
Waits me there
In the turret whence the charioteers caught soul
For the goal,
When the king looked, where she looks now, breathless, dumb
Till I come.

VI

But he looked upon the city, every side,
Far and wide,
All the mountains topped with temples, all the glades'
Colonnades,
All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts, — and then,
All the men!
When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand,
Either hand
On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace
Of my face,
Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech
Each on each.

VII

In one year they sent a million fighters forth
South and North,
And they built their gods a brazen pillar high
As the sky,

Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force —
Gold, of course.
Oh heart! oh blood that freezes, blood that burns!
Earth's returns
For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin!
Shut them in,
With their triumphs and their glories and the rest!
Love is best.

A LOVERS' QUARREL

1855

I

Oh, what a dawn of day!
How the March sun feels like May!
All is blue again
After last night's rain,
And the South dries the hawthorn-spray.
Only, my Love 's away!
I 'd as lief that the blue were gray.

II

Runnels, which rillets swell,
Must be dancing down the dell,
With a foaming head
On the beryl bed
Paven smooth as a hermit's cell;
Each with a tale to tell,
Could my Love but attend as well.

III

Dearest, three months ago!
When we lived blocked-up with snow, —

When the wind would edge
In and in his wedge,
In, as far as the point could go —
Not to our ingle, though,
Where we loved each the other so!

IV

Laughs with so little cause!
We devised games out of straws
We would try and trace
One another's face
In the ash, as an artist draws;
Free on each other's flaws,
How we chattered like two church daws!

V

What 's in the "Times"? — a scold
At the Emperor deep and cold;
He has taken a bride
To his gruesome side,
That 's as fair as himself is bold:
There they sit ermine-stoled,
And she powders her hair with gold.

VI

Fancy the Pampas' sheen!
Miles and miles of gold and green
Where the sunflowers blow
In a solid glow,
And — to break now and then the screen —
Black neck and eyeballs keen,
Up a wild horse leaps between!

VII

Try, will our table turn?
Lay your hands there light, and yearn
Till the yearning slips
Thro' the finger-tips
In a fire which a few discern,
And a very few feel burn,
And the rest, they may live and learn!

VIII

Then we would up and pace,
For a change, about the place,
Each with arm o'er neck:
'T is our quarter-deck,
We are seamen in woful case.
Help in the ocean-space!
Or, if no help, we 'll embrace.

IX

See, how she looks now, dressed
In a sledging-cap and vest!
'T is a huge fur cloak —
Like a reindeer's yoke
Falls the lappet along the breast:
Sleeves for her arms to rest,
Or to hand, as my Love likes best.

X

Teach me to flirt a fan
As the Spanish ladies can,
Or I tint your lip
With a burnt stick's tip

And you turn into such a man!
Just the two spots that span
Half the bill of the young male swan.

XI

Dearest, three months ago
When the mesmerizer Snow
With his hand's first sweep
Put the earth to sleep:
'T was a time when the heart could show
All — how was earth to know,
'Neath the mute hand's to-and-fro?

XII

Dearest, three months ago
When we loved each other so,
Lived and loved the same
Till an evening came
When a shaft from the devil's bow
Pierced to our ingle-glow,
And the friends were friend and foe!

XIII

Not from the heart beneath —
'T was a bubble born of breath,
Neither sneer nor vaunt,
Nor reproach nor taunt.
See a word, how it severeth!
Oh, power of life and death
In the tongue, as the Preacher saith!

XIV

Woman, and will you cast
For a word, quite off at last

Me, your own, your You, —
Since, as truth is true,
I was You all the happy past —
Me do you leave aghast
With the memories We amassed?

XV

Love, if you knew the light
That your soul casts in my sight,
How I look to you
For the pure and true
And the beauteous and the right, —
Bear with a moment's spite
When a mere mote threats the white!

XVI

What of a hasty word?
Is the fleshly heart not stirred
By a worm's pin-prick
Where its roots are quick?
See the eye, by a fly's foot blurred —
Ear, when a straw is heard
Scratch the brain's coat of curd!

XVII

Foul be the world or fair
More or less, how can I care?
'T is the world the same
For my praise or blame,
And endurance is easy there.
Wrong in the one thing rare —
Oh, it is hard to bear!

XVIII

Here 's the spring back or close,
When the almond-blossom blows:
We shall have the word
In a minor third
There is none but the cuckoo knows:
Heaps of the guelder-rose!
I must bear with it, I suppose.

XIX

Could but November come,
Were the noisy birds struck dumb
At the warning slash
Of his driver's-lash —
I would laugh like the valiant Thumb
Facing the castle glum
And the giant's fee-faw-fum!

XX

Then, were the world well stripped
Of the gear wherein equipped
We can stand apart,
Heart dispense with heart
In the sun, with the flowers unnipped
Oh, the world's hangings ripped,
We were both in a bare-walled crypt!

XXI

Each in the crpyt would cry
"But one freezes here! and why?
When a heart, as chill,
At my own would thrill

Back to life, and its fires out-fly?
Heart, shall we live or die?
The rest, . . . settle by-and-by!"

XXII

So, she 'd efface the score,
And forgive me as before.
It is twelve o'clock:
I shall hear her knock
In the worst of a storm's uproar,
I shall pull her through the door,
I shall have her for evermore!

UP AT A VILLA — DOWN IN THE CITY

(AS DISTINGUISHED BY AN ITALIAN PERSON OF QUALITY)

1855

I

HAD I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,
The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city-square;
Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window there!

II

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear, at least!
There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast;
While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more than a beast.

III

Well now, look at our villa! stuck like the horn of a bull
Just on a mountain-edge as bare as the creature's skull,
Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull!
— I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair 's turned wool.

IV

But the city, oh the city — the square with the houses! Why?
They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there 's something to take the eye!
Houses in four straight lines, not a single front awry;
You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters, who hurries by;
Green blinds, as a matter of course to draw when the sun gets high;
And the shops with fanciful signs which are painted properly.

V

What of a villa? Though winter be over in March by rights,
'T is May perhaps ere the snow shall have withered well off the heights:
You 've the brown ploughed land before, where the oxen steam and wheeze,
And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint gray olive-trees.

VI

Is it better in May, I ask you? You 've summer all at once;
In a day he leaps complete with a few strong April suns.

'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce risen three fingers well,
The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out its great red bell
Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the children to pick and sell.

VII

Is it ever hot in the square? There 's a fountain to spout and splash!
In the shade it sings and springs; in the shine such foam-bows flash
On the horses with curling fish-tails, that prance and paddle and pash
Round the lady atop in her conch — fifty gazers do not abash,
Though all that she wears is some weeds round her waist in a sort of sash.

VIII

All the year long at the villa, nothing to see though you linger,
Except yon cypress that points like death's lean lifted forefinger.
Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix i' the corn and mingle,
Or thrid the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem a-tingle.
Late August or early September, the stunning cicala is shrill,
And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the resinous firs on the hill.
Enough of the seasons, — I spare you the months of the fever and chill.

IX

Ere you open your eyes in the city, the blessed
church-bells begin:
No sooner the bells leave off than the diligence
rattles in:
You get the pick of the news, and it costs you never
a pin.
By-and-by there 's the travelling doctor gives pills,
lets blood, draws teeth;
Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the market
beneath.
At the post-office such a scene-picture — the new
play, piping hot!
And a notice how, only this morning, three liberal
thieves were shot.
Above it, behold the Archbishop's most fatherly of
rebukes,
And beneath, with his crown and his lion, some
little new law of the Duke's!
Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the Reverend
Don So-and-so
Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, Saint Jerome
and Cicero,
"And moreover," (the sonnet goes rhyming,) "the
skirts of Saint Paul has reached,
Having preached us those six Lent-lectures more
unctuous than ever he preached."
Noon strikes, — here sweeps the procession! our
Lady borne smiling and smart
With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and seven
swords stuck in her heart!
Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle*
the fife;
No keeping one's haunches still: it 's the greatest
pleasure in life.

X

But bless you, it 's dear — it 's dear! fowls, wine, at double the rate.
They have clapped a new tax upon salt, and what oil pays passing the gate
It 's horror to think of. And so, the villa for me, not the city!
Beggars can scarcely be choosers: but still — ah, the pity, the pity!
Look, two and two go the priests, then the monks with cowls and sandals,
And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-holding the yellow candles;
One, he carries a flag up straight, and another a cross with handles,
And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the better prevention of scandals:
Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife.
Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no such pleasure in life!

A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S

1855

I

Oh Galuppi, Baldassaro, this is very sad to find!
I can hardly misconceive you; it would prove me deaf and blind;
But although I take your meaning, 't is with such a heavy mind!

II

Here you come with your old music, and here 's all
the good it brings.
What, they lived once thus at Venice where the
merchants were the kings,
Where Saint Mark's is, where the Doges used to
wed the sea with rings?

III

Ay, because the sea 's the street there; and 't is
arched by . . . what you call
. . . Shylock's bridge with houses on it, where they
kept the carnival:
I was never out of England — it 's as if I saw it all.

IV

Did young people take their pleasure when the sea
was warm in May?
Balls and masks begun at midnight, burning ever
to mid-day,
When they made up fresh adventures for the mor-
row, do you say?

V

Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so round and lips
so red, —
On her neck the small face buoyant, like a bell-
flower on its bed,
O'er the breast's superb abundance where a man
might base his head?

VI

Well, and it was graceful of them — they 'd break
talk off and afford

— She, to bite her mask's black velvet — he, to finger on his sword,
While you sat and played Toccatas, stately at the clavichord?

VII

What? Those lesser thirds so plaintive, sixths diminished, sigh on sigh,
Told them something? Those suspensions, those solutions — "Must we die?"
Those commiserating sevenths — "Life might last! we can but try!"

VIII

"Were you happy?" — "Yes." — "And are you still as happy?" — "Yes. And you?"
— "Then, more kisses!" — "Did *I* stop them, when a million seemed so few?"
Hark, the dominant's persistence till it must be answered to!

IX

So, an octave struck the answer. Oh, they praised you, I dare say!
"Brave Galuppi! that was music! good alike at grave and gay!
I can always leave off talking when I hear a master play!"

Then they left you for their pleasure: till in due time, one by one,
Some with lives that came to nothing, some with deeds as well undone,
Death stepped tacitly and took them where they never see the sun.

XI

But when I sit down to reason, think to take my stand nor swerve,
While I triumph o'er a secret wrung from nature's close reserve,
In you come with your cold music till I creep thro' every nerve.

XII

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, creaking where a house was burned:
"Dust and ashes, dead and done with, Venice spent what Venice earned.
The soul, doubtless, is immortal — where a soul can be discerned.

XIII

"Yours for instance: you know physics, something of geology,
Mathematics are your pastime; souls shall rise in their degree;
Butterflies may dread extinction, — you 'll not die, it cannot be!

XIV

"As for Venice and her people, merely born to bloom and drop,
Here on earth they bore their fruitage, mirth and folly were the crop:
What of soul was left, I wonder, when the kissing had to stop?

XV

"Dust and ashes!" So you creak it, and I want the heart to scold.

Dear dead women, with such hair, too — what 's
become of all the gold
Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I feel chilly
and grown old.

OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE

1855

I

THE morn when first it thunders in March,
The eel in the pond gives a leap, they say:
As I leaned and looked over the aloed arch
Of the villa-gate this warm March day,
No flash snapped, no dumb thunder rolled
In the valley beneath where, white and wide
And washed by the morning water-gold,
Florence lay out on the mountain-side.

II

River and bridge and street and square
Lay mine, as much at my beck and call,
Through the live translucent bath of air,
As the sights in a magic crystal ball.
And of all I saw and of all I praised,
The most to praise and the best to see
Was the startling bell-tower Giotto raised:
But why did it more than startle me?

III

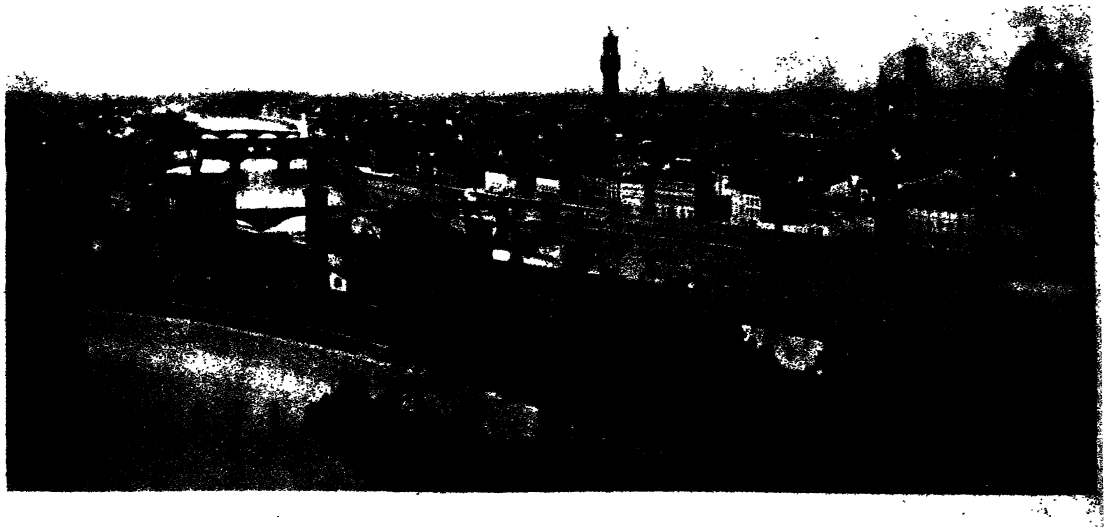
Giotto, how, with that soul of yours,
Could you play me false who loved you so?
Some slights if a certain heart endures

Florence from San Miniato

(From a photograph by W. Hall Griffin)

'River and bridge and street and square
Lay mine, as much at my beck and call,
Through the live translucent bath of air,
As the sights in a magic crystal ball.
And of all I saw and of all I praised
The most to praise and the best to see
Was the startling bell-tower Giotto raised
But why did it more than startle me?

— Old Pictures in Florence.



Yet it feels, I would have your fellows know!
I' faith, I perceive not why I should care
To break a silence that suits them best,
But the thing grows somewhat hard to bear
When I find a Giotto join the rest.

IV

On the arch where olives overhead
Print the blue sky twig and leaf,
(That sharp-curled leaf which they never shed)
'Twixt the aloes, I used to lean in chief,
And mark through the winter afternoons,
By a gift God grants me now and then,
In the mild decline of those suns like moons,
Who walked in Florence, besides her men.

V

They might chirp and chaffer, come and go
For pleasure or profit, her men alive —
My business was hardly with them, I trow,
But with empty cells of the human hive;
— With the chapter-room, the cloister-porch,
The church's apsis, aisle or nave,
Its crypt, one fingers along with a torch,
Its face set full for the sun to shave.

VI

Wherever a fresco peels and drops,
Wherever an outline weakens and wanes
Till the latest life in the painting stops,
Stands One whom each fainter pulse-tick pains:

One, wishful each scrap should clutch the brick,
Each tinge not wholly escape the plaster,
— A lion who dies of an ass's kick,
The wronged great soul of an ancient Master.

VII

For oh, this world and the wrong it does!
They are safe in heaven with their backs to it,
The Michaels and Rafaels, you hum and buzz
Round the works of, you of the little wit!
Do their eyes contract to the earth's old scope,
Now that they see God face to face,
And have all attained to be poets, I hope?
'T is their holiday now, in any case.

VIII

Much they reck of your praise and you!
But the wronged great souls — can they be quit
Of a world where their work is all to do,
Where you style them, you of the little wit,
Old Master This and Early the Other,
Not dreaming that Old and New are fellows:
A younger succeeds to an elder brother,
Da Vincis derive in good time from Dellos.

IX

And here where your praise might yield returns,
And a handsome word or two give help,
Here, after your kind, the mastiff girns
And the puppy pack of poodles yelp.
What, not a word for Stefano there,
Of brow once prominent and starry,
Called Nature's Ape and the world's despair
For his peerless painting? (See Vasari.)

X

There stands the Master. Study, my friends,
What a man's work comes to! So he plans it,
Performs it, perfects it, makes amends
For the toiling and moiling, and then, *sic transit!*
Happier the thrifty blind-folk labor,
With upturned eye while the hand is busy,
Not sidling a glance at the coin of their neighbor!
'T is looking downward that makes one dizzy.

XI

"If you knew their work you would deal your dole."
May I take úpon me to instruct you?
When Greek Art ran and reached the goal,
Thus much had the world to boast *in fructu* —
The Truth of Man, as by God first spoken,
Which the actual generations garble,
Was re-uttered, and Soul (which Limbs betoken)
And Limbs (Soul informs) made new in marble.

XII

So, you saw yourself as you wished you were,
As you might have been, as you cannot be;
Earth here, rebuked by Olympus there:
And grew content in your poor degree
With your little power, by those statues' godhead,
And your little scope, by their eyes' full sway,
And your little grace, by their grace embodied,
And your little date, by their forms that stay.

XIII

You would fain be kinglier, say, than I am?
Even so, you will not sit like Theseus.

You would prove a model? The Son of Priam
Has yet the advantage in arms' and knees' use.
You 're wroth — can you slay your snake like Apollo?
You 're grieved — still Niobe 's the grander!
You live — there 's the Racers' frieze to follow:
You die — there 's the dying Alexander.

XIV

So, testing your weakness by their strength,
Your meagre charms by their rounded beauty,
Measured by Art in your breadth and length,
You learned — to submit is a mortal's duty.
— When I say "you" 't is the common soul,
The collective, I mean: the race of Man
That receives life in parts to live in a whole,
And grow here according to God's clear plan.

XV

Growth came when, looking your last on them all,
You turned your eyes inwardly one fine day
And cried with a start — What if we so small
Be greater and grander the while than they?
Are they perfect of lineament, perfect of stature?
In both, of such lower types are we
Precisely because of our wider nature;
For time, theirs — ours, for eternity.

XVI

To-day's brief passion limits their range;
It seethes with the morrow for us and more.
They are perfect — how else? they shall never change:
We are faulty — why not? we have time in store.

The Artificer's hand is not arrested
With us; we are rough-hewn, nowise polished:
They stand for our copy, and, once invested
With all they can teach, we shall see them abolish.

XVII

'T is a life-long toil till our lump be leaven —
The better! What 's come to perfection perishes.
Things learned on earth, we shall practise in heaven:
Works done least rapidly, Art most cherishes.
Thyself shalt afford the example, Giotto!
Thy one work, not to decrease or diminish,
Done at a stroke, was just (was it not?) "O!"
Thy great Campanile is still to finish.

XVIII

Is it true that we are now, and shall be hereafter,
But what and where depend on life's minute?
Hails heavenly cheer or infernal laughter
Our first step out of the gulf or in it?
Shall Man, such step within his endeavor,
Man's face, have no more play and action
Than joy which is crystallized forever,
Or grief, an eternal petrifaction?

XIX

On which I conclude, that the early painters,
To cries of "Greek Art and what more wish you?" —
Replied, "To become now self-acquainters,
And paint man man, whatever the issue!
Make new hopes shine through the flesh they fray,
New fears aggrandize the rags and tatters:

To bring the invisible full into play!
Let the visible go to the dogs — what matters?"

XX

Give these, I exhort you, their guerdon and glory
For daring so much, before they well did it.
The first of the new, in our race's story,
Beats the last of the old; 't is no idle quiddit.
The worthies began a revolution,
Which if on earth you intend to acknowledge,
Why, honor them now! (ends my allocution)
Nor confer your degree when the folk leave college.

XXI

There 's a fancy some lean to and others hate —
That, when this life is ended, begins
New work for the soul in another state,
Where it strives and gets weary, loses and wins:
Where the strong and the weak, this world's conge-ries,
Repeat in large what they practised in small,
Through life after life in unlimited series;
Only the scale 's to be changed, that 's all.

XXII

Yet I hardly know. When a soul has seen
By the means of Evil that Good is best,
And, through earth and its noise, what is heaven's serene, —
When our faith in the same has stood the test —
Why, the child grown man, you burn the rod,
The uses of labor are surely done;
There remaineth a rest for the people of God:
And I have had troubles enough, for one.

XXIII

But at any rate I have loved the season
Of Art's spring-birth so dim and dewy;
My sculptor is Nicolo the Pisan,
My painter — who but Cimabue?
Nor ever was man of them all indeed,
From these to Ghiberti and Ghirlandajo,
Could say that he missed my critic-meed.
So, now to my special grievance — heigh ho!

XXIV

Their ghosts still stand, as I said before,
Watching each fresco flaked and rasped,
Blocked up, knocked out, or whitewashed o'er:
— No getting again what the church has grasped!
The works on the wall must take their chance;
"Works never conceded to England's thick clime!"
(I hope they prefer their inheritance
Of a bucketful of Italian quick-lime.)

XXV

When they go at length, with such a shaking
Of heads o'er the old delusion, sadly
Each master his way through the black streets taking,
Where many a lost work breathes though badly —
Why don't they bethink them of who has merited?
Why not reveal, while their pictures dree
Such doom, how a captive might be out-ferreted?
Why is it they never remember me?

XXVI

Not that I expect the great Bigordi,
Nor Sandro to hear me, chivalric, bellicose;

Nôr the wronged *Lippino*; and not a word *I*
Say of a scrap of Frà Angelico's:
But are you too fine, Taddeo Gaddi,
To grant me a taste of your intonaco,
Some Jerome that seeks the heaven with a sad eye?
Not a churlish saint, Lorenzo Monaco?

XXVII

Could not the ghost with the close red cap,
My Pollajolo, the twice a craftsman,
Save me a sample, give me the hap
Of a muscular Christ that shows the draughtsman?
No Virgin by him the somewhat petty,
Of finical touch and tempera crumbly —
Could not Alesso Baldovinetti
Contribute so much, I ask him humbly?

XXVIII

Margheritone of Arezzo,
With the grave-clothes garb and swaddling barret
(Why purse up mouth and beak in a pet so,
You bald old saturnine poll-clawed parrot?)
Not a poor glimmering Crucifixion,
Where in the foreground kneels the donor?
If such remain, as is my conviction,
The hoarding it does you but little honor.

XXIX

They pass; for them the panels may thrill,
The tempera grow alive and tinglish;
Their pictures are left to the mercies still
Of dealers and stealers, Jews and the English,

Who, seeing mere money's worth in their prize,
Will sell it to somebody calm as Zeno
At naked High Art, and in ecstasies
Before some clay-cold vile Carlino!

XXX

No matter for these! But Giotto, you,
Have you allowed as the town-tongues babble it,—
Oh, never! it shall not be counted true —
That a certain precious little tablet
Which Buonarroti eyed like a lover, —
Was buried so long in oblivion's womb
And, left for another than I to discover,
Turns up at last! and to whom? — to whom?

XXXI

I, that have haunted the dim San Spirito,
(Or was it rather the Ognissanti?)
Patient on altar-step plaining a weary toe!
Nay, I shall have it yet! *Detur amanti!*
My Koh-i-noor — or (if that 's a platitude)
Jewel of Giamschid, the Persian Sofi's eye;
So, in anticipative gratitude,
What if I take up my hope and prophesy?

XXXII

When the hour grows ripe, and a certain dotard
Is pitched, no parcel that needs invoicing,
To the worse side of the Mont Saint Gothard,
We shall begin by way of rejoicing;
None of that shooting the sky (blank cartridge),
Nor a civic guard, all plumes and lacquer,
Hunting Radetzky's soul like a partridge
Over Morello with squib and cracker.

XXXIII

This time we 'll shoot better game and bag 'em hot —
No mere display at the stone of Dante,
But a kind of sober Witanagemot
(Ex: "Casa Guidi," *quod videas ante*)
Shall ponder, once Freedom restored to Florence,
How Art may return that departed with her.
Go, hated house, go each trace of the Loraine's,
And bring us the days of Orgagna hither!

XXXIV

How we shall prologize, how we shall perorate,
Utter fit things upon art and history,
Feel truth at blood-heat and falsehood at zero rate,
Make of the want of the age no mystery;
Contrast the fructuous and sterile eras,
Show — monarchy ever its uncouth cub licks
Out of the bear's shape into Chimæra's,
While Pure Art's birth is still the republic's.

XXXV

Then one shall propose in a speech (curt Tuscan,
Expurgate and sober, with scarcely an "*issimo*,")
To end now our half-told tale of Cambuscan,
And turn the bell-tower's *alt* to *altissimo:*
And fine as the beak of a young beccaccia
The Campanile, the Duomo's fit ally,
Shall soar up in gold full fifty braccia,
Completing Florence, as Florence Italy.

XXXVI

Shall I be alive that morning the scaffold
Is broken away, and the long-pent fire,

Like the golden Lope of the world, unbaffled
 Springs from its sleep, and up goes the spire
While "God and the People" plain for its motto,
 Thence the new tricolor flaps at the sky?
At least to foresee that glory of Giotto
 And Florence together, the first am I!

'DE GUSTIBUS — "

1855

I

YOUR ghost will walk, you lover of trees,
 (If our loves remain)
 In an English lane,
By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.
Hark, those two in the hazel coppice —
A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,
 Making love, say, —
 The happier they!
Draw yourself up from the light of the moon,
And let them pass, as they will too soon,
 With the bean-flowers' boon,
 And the blackbird's tune,
 And May, and June!

II

What I love best in all the world
Is a castle, precipice-encurled,
In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine
Or look for me, old fellow of mine,
(If I get my head from out the mouth

O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,
And come again to the land of lands) —
In a sea-side house to the farther South,
Where the baked cicala dies of drouth,
And one sharp tree — 't is a cypress — stands,
By the many hundred years red-rusted,
Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'ercrusted,
My sentinel to guard the sands
To the water's edge. For, what expands
Before the house, but the great opaque
Blue breadth of sea without a break?
While, in the house, for ever crumbles
Some fragment of the frescoed walls,
From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.
A girl bare-footed brings, and tumbles
Down on the pavement, green-flesh melons,
And says there 's news to-day — the king
Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,
Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling:
— She hopes they have not caught the felons.
Italy, my Italy!
Queen Mary's saying serves for me —
(When fortune's malice
Lost her — Calais) —
Open my heart and you will see
Graved inside of it, "Italy."
Such lovers old are I and she:
So it always was, so shall ever be!

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD

1845

I

Oh, to be in England
Now that April s there,
And whoever wakes in England
Sees, some morning, unaware,
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
In England — now!

II

And after April, when May follows,
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows!
Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops — at the bent spray's edge —
That's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over,
Lest you should think he never could recapture
The first fine careless rapture!
And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower
— Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower!

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA

Nobly, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the North-
west died away;
Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into
Cadiz Bay;
Bluish 'mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar
lay;
In the dimmest North-east distance dawned Gi-
braltar grand and gray;
"Here and here did England help me: how can I
help England?" — say,
Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to
praise and pray,
While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.

SAUL

1845

I

Said Abner, "At last thou art come! Ere I tell, ere
thou speak,
Kiss my cheek, wish me well!" Then I wished it,
and did kiss his cheek.
And he, "Since the King, O my friend, for thy
countenance sent,
Neither drunken nor eaten have we; nor until from
his tent
Thou return with the joyful assurance the King
liveth yet,
Shall our lip with the honey be bright, with the
water be wet.

For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a space of three days,
Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants, of prayer nor of praise,
To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have ended their strife,
And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch sinks back upon life.

II

"Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved! God's child with his dew
On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies still living and blue
Just broken to twine round thy harp-strings, as if no wild heat
Were now raging to torture the desert!"

III

Then I, as was meet,
Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and rose on my feet,
And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The tent was unlooped;
I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and under I stooped;
Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch, all withered and gone,
That extends to the second enclosure, I groped my way on
Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open. Then once more I prayed,
And opened the foldskirts and entered, and was not afraid

But spoke, "Here is David, thy servant!" And no
voice replied.
At the first I saw naught but the blackness; but
soon I descried
A something more black than the blackness — the
vast, the upright
Main prop which sustains the pavilion: and slow
into sight
Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest of all.
Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-roof,
showed Saul.

IV

He stood as erect as the tent-prop, both arms
stretched out wide
On the great cross-support in the centre, that goes
to each side;
He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there as, caught
in his pangs
And waiting his change, the king-serpent all heavily
hangs,
Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliverance
come
With the spring-time, — so agonized Saul, drear
and stark, blind and dumb.

V

Then I tuned my harp, — took off the lilies we
twine round its chords
Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noon-tide —
those sunbeams like swords!
And I first played the tune all our sheep know, as,
one after one,

So docile they come to the pen-door till folding be done.
They are white and untorn by the bushes, for lo, they have fed
Where the long grasses stifle the water within the stream's bed;
And now one after one seeks its lodging, as star follows star
Into eve and the blue far above us, — so blue and so far!

VI

— Then the tune, for which quails on the cornland will each leave his mate
To fly after the player; then, what makes the crickets elate
Till for boldness they fight one another; and then, what has weight
To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside his sand house —
There are none such as he for a wonder, half bird and half mouse!
God made all the creatures and gave them our love and our fear,
To give sign, we and they are his children, one family here.

VII

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers, their wine-song, when hand
Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friendship, and great hearts expand
And grow one in the sense of this world's life. — And then, the last song

When the dead man is praised on his journey — "Bear, bear him along
With his few faults shut up like dead flowerets! Are balm-seeds not here
To console us? The land has none left such as he on the bier.
Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother!" — And then, the glad chaunt
Of the marriage, — first go the young maidens, next, she whom we vaunt
As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling. — And then, the great march
Wherein man runs to man to assist him and buttress an arch
Naught can break; who shall harm them, our friends? — Then, the chorus intoned
As the Levites go up to the altar in glory enthroned.
But I stopped here: for here in the darkness Saul groaned.

VIII

And I paused, held my breath in such silence, and listened apart;
And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered: and sparkles 'gan dart
From the jewels that woke in his turban, at once with a start,
All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies courageous at heart.
So the head: but the body still moved not, still hung there erect.
And I bent once again to my playing, pursued it unchecked,
As I sang, —

IX

"Oh, our manhood's prime vigor! No spirit feels waste,
Not a muscle is stopped in its playing nor sinew unbraced.
Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up to rock,
The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree, the cool silver shock
Of the plunge in a pool's living water, the hunt of the bear,
And the sultriness showing the lion is crouched in his lair.
And the meal, the rich dates yellowed over with gold dust divine,
And the locust-flesh steeped in the pitcher, the full draught of wine,
And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bulrushes tell
That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well.
How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses forever in joy!
Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father, whose sword thou didst guard
When he trusted thee forth with the armies, for glorious reward?
Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother, held up as men sung
The low song of the nearly-departed, and hear her faint tongue
Joining in while it could to the witness, 'Let one more attest,

I have lived, seen God's hand thro' a lifetime, and all was for best'?
Then they sung thro' their tears in strong triumph, not much, but the rest.
And thy brothers, the help and the contest, the working whence grew
Such result as, from seething grape-bundles, the spirit strained true:
And the friends of thy boyhood !—that boyhood of wonder and hope,
Present promise and wealth of the future beyond the eye's scope, —
Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a people is thine;
And all gifts, which the world offers singly, on one head combine!
On one head, all the beauty and strength, love and rage (like the throe
That, a-work in the rock, helps its labor and lets the gold go)
High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame crowning them, — all
Brought to blaze on the head of one creature — King Saul!"

X

And lo, with that leap of my spirit, — heart, hand, harp and voice,
Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow, each bidding rejoice
Saul's fame in the light it was made for — as when, dare I say,
The Lord's army, in rapture of service, strains through its array,

And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot — "Saul!"
cried I, and stopped,
And waited the thing that should follow. Then
Saul, who hung propped
By the tent's cross-support in the centre, was struck
by his name.
Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy summons goes
right to the aim,
And some mountain, the last to withstand her, that
held (he alone,
While the vale laughed in freedom and flowers) on a
broad bust of stone
A year's snow bound about for a breastplate, —
leaves grasp of the sheet?
Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunderously
down to his feet,
And there fronts you, stark, black, but alive yet,
your mountain of old,
With his rents, the successive bequeathings of ages
untold —
Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles, each
furrow and scar
Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tempest —
all hail, there they are!
— Now again to be softened with verdure, again
hold the nest
Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young to the
green on his crest
For their food in the ardors of summer. One long
shudder thrilled
All the tent till the very air tingled, then sank and
was stilled
At the King's self left standing before me, released
and aware.

What was gone, what remained? All to traverse,
'twixt hope and despair;
Death was past, life not come: so he waited.
Awhile his right hand
Held the brow, helped the eyes left too vacant
forthwith to remand
To their place what new objects should enter: 't was
Saul as before.
I looked up and dared gaze at those eyes, nor was
hurt any more
Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn, ye watch
from the shore,
At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean — a sun's
slow decline
Over hills which, resolved in stern silence, o'erlap
and entwine
Base with base to knit strength more intensely: so,
arm folded arm
O'er the chest whose slow heavings subsided.

XI

What spell or what charm,
(For, awhile there was trouble within me) what
next should I urge
To sustain him where song had restored him? —
Song filled to the verge
His cup with the wine of this life, pressing all that
it yields
Of mere fruitage, the strength and the beauty:
beyond, on what fields,
Glean a vintage more potent and perfect to brighten
the eye
And bring blood to the lip, and command them the
cup they put by?

He saith, "It is good;" still he drinks not: he lets me praise life,
Gives assent, yet would die for his own part.

XII

Then fancies grew rife
Which had come long ago on the pasture, when round me the sheep
Fed in silence — above, the one eagle wheeled slow as in sleep;
And I lay in my hollow and mused on the world that might lie
'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip 'twixt the hill and the sky:
And I laughed — "Since my days are ordained to be passed with my flocks,
Let me people at least, with my fancies, the plains and the rocks,
Dream the life I am never to mix with, and image the show
Of mankind as they live in those fashions I hardly shall know!
Schemes of life, its best rules and right uses, the courage that gains,
And the prudence that keeps what men strive for."
And now these old trains
Of vague thought came again; I grew surer; so, once more the string
Of my harp made response to my spirit, as thus —

XIII

"Yea, my King,"
I began — "thou dost well in rejecting mere comforts that spring

From the mere mortal life held in common by man
and by brute:
In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in our soul
it bears fruit.
Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree, — how
its stem trembled first
Till it passed the kid's lip, the stag's antler; then
safely outburst
The fan-branches all round; and thou mindest when
these too, in turn
Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed perfect:
yet more was to learn,
E'en the good that comes in with the palm-fruit.
Our dates shall we slight,
When their juice brings a cure for all sorrow? or
care for the plight
Of the palm's self whose slow growth produced
them? Not so! stem and branch
Shall decay, nor be known in their place, while the
palm-wine shall staunch
Every wound of man's spirit in winter. I pour thee
such wine.
Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for! the spirit
be thine!
By the spirit, when age shall o'ercome thee, thou
still shalt enjoy
More indeed, than at first when inconscious, the
life of a boy.
Crush that life, and behold its wine running! Each
deed thou hast done
Dies, revives, goes to work in the world; until e'en
as the sun
Looking down on the earth, though clouds spoil
him, though tempests efface,

Can find nothing his own deed produced not, must
everywhere trace
The results of his past summer-prime, — so, each
ray of thy will,
Every flash of thy passion and prowess, long over,
shall thrill
Thy whole people, the countless, with ardor, till
they too give forth
A like cheer to their sons, who in turn, fill the South
and the North
With the radiance thy deed was the germ of.
Carouse in the past!
But the license of age has its limit; thou diest at
last:
As the lion when age dims his eyeball, the rose at
her height
So with man — so is power and his beauty forever
take flight.
No! Again a long draught of my soul-wine! Look
forth o'er the years!
Thou hast done now with eyes for the actual; begin
with the seer's!
Is Saul dead? In the depth of the vale make his
tomb — bid arise
A gray mountain of marble heaped four-square, till,
built to the skies,
Let it mark where the great First King slumbers:
whose fame would ye know?
Up above see the rock's naked face, where the
record shall go
In great characters cut by the scribe, — Such was
Saul, so he did;
With the sages directing the work, by the populace
chid, —

For not half, they 'll affirm, is comprised there!
Which fault to amend,
In the grove with his kind grows the cedar, whereon
they shall spend
(See, in tablets 't is level before them) their praise,
and record
With the gold of the graver, Saul's story, — the
statesman's great word
Side by side with the poet's sweet comment. The
river's a-wave
With smooth paper-reeds grazing each other when
prophet-winds rave:
So the pen gives unborn generations their due and
their part
In thy being! Then, first of the mighty, thank God
that thou art!"

XIV

And behold while I sang . . . but O Thou who
didst grant me that day,
And before it not seldom hast granted thy help to
essay,
Carry on and complete an adventure, — my shield
and my sword
In that act where my soul was thy servant, thy
word was my word, —
Still be with me, who then at the summit of human
endeavor
And scaling the highest, man's thought could, gazed
hopeless as ever
On the new stretch of heaven above me — till,
mighty to save,
Just one lift of thy hand cleared that distance —
God's throne from man's grave!

Let me tell out my tale to its ending — my voice to my heart
Which can scarce dare believe in what marvels last night I took part,
As this morning I gather the fragments, alone with my sheep,
And still fear lest the terrible glory evanish like sleep!
For I wake in the gray dewy covert, while Hebron upheaves
The dawn struggling with night on his shoulder, and Kidron retrieves
Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

XV

I say then, — my song
While I sang thus, assuring the monarch, and ever more strong
Made a proffer of good to console him — he slowly resumed
His old motions and habitudes kingly. The right-hand replumed
His black locks to their wonted composure, adjusted the swathes
Of his turban, and see — the huge sweat that his countenance bathes,
He wipes off with the robe; and he girds now his loins as of yore,
And feels slow for the armlets of price, with the clasp set before.
He is Saul, ye remember in glory, — ere error had bent
The broad brow from the daily communion; and still, though much spent

Be the life and the bearing that front you, the
same, God did choose,
To receive what a man may waste, desecrate, never
quite lose.
So sank he along by the tent-prop till, stayed by the
pile
Of his armor and war-cloak and garments, he leaned
there awhile,
And sat out my singing, — one arm round the tent-
prop, to raise
His bent head, and the other hung slack — till I
touched on the praise
I foresaw from all men in all time, to the man pa-
tient there;
And thus ended, the harp falling forward. Then
first I was 'ware
That he sat, as I say, with my head just above his
vast knees
Which were thrust out on each side around me, like
oak-roots which please
To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked up
to know
If the best I could do had brought solace: he spoke
not, but slow
Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he laid it
with care
Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on my brow:
thro' my hair
The large fingers were pushed, and he bent back my
head, with kind power —
All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men do a
flower.
Thus held he me there with his great eyes that
scrutinized mine —

And oh, all my heart how it loved him! but where was the sign?
I yearned — "Could I help thee, my father, inventing a bliss,
I would add, to that life of the past, both the future and this;
I would give thee new life altogether, as good, ages hence,
As this moment, — had love but the warrant, love's heart to dispense!"

XVI

Then the truth came upon me. No harp more — no song more! outbroke —

XVII

"I have gone the whole round of creation: I saw and I spoke:
I, a work of God's hand for that purpose, received in my brain
And pronounced on the rest of his handwork — returned him again
His creation's approval or censure: I spoke as I saw:
I report, as a man may of God's work — all 's love, yet all 's law.
Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me. Each faculty tasked
To perceive him, has gained an abyss, where a dewdrop was asked.
Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels at Wisdom laid bare.
Have I forethought? how purblind, how blank, to the Infinite Care!
Do I task any faculty highest, to image success?

I but open my eyes, — and perfection, no more and no less,
In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is seen God
In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and the clod.
And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew
(With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises it too)
The submission of man's nothing-perfect to God's all-complete,
As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to his feet.
Yet with all this abounding experience, this deity known,
I shall dare to discover some province, some gift of my own.
There 's a faculty pleasant to exercise, hard to hoodwink,
I am fain to keep still in abeyance, (I laugh as I think)
Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it, wot ye, I worst
E'en the Giver in one gift. — Behold, I could love if I durst!
But I sink the pretension as fearing a man may o'ertake
God's own speed in the one way of love: I abstain for love's sake.
— What, my soul? see thus far and no farther? when doors great and small,
Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should the hundredth appall?
In the least things have faith, yet distrust in the greatest of all?

Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,
That I doubt his own love can compete with it? Here, the parts shift?
Here, the creature surpass the Creator, — the end, what Began?
Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this man,
And dare doubt he alone shall not help him, who yet alone can?
Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare will, much less power,
To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the marvellous dower
Of the life he was gifted and filled with? to make such a soul,
Such a body, and then such an earth for insphering the whole?
And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm tears attest)
These good things being given, to go on, and give one more, the best?
Ay, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain at the height
This perfection, — succeed with life's day-spring, death's minute of night?
Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul the mistake,
Saul the failure, the ruin he seems now, — and bid him awake
From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find himself set
Clear and safe in new light and new life, — a new harmony yet
To be run, and continued, and ended — who knows? — or endure!

The man taught enough, by life's dream, of the
rest to make sure;
By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensi-
fied bliss,
And the next world's reward and repose, by the
struggles in this.

XVIII

"I believe it! 'T is thou, God, that givest, 't is I
who receive:
In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to
believe.
All 's one gift: thou canst grant it moreover, as
prompt to my prayer
As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms
to the air.
From thy will, stream the worlds, life and nature,
thy dread Sabaoth:
I will? — the mere atoms despise me! Why am I
not loth
To look that, even that in the face too? Why is it
I dare
Think but lightly of such impuissance? What stops
my despair?
This; — 't is not what man Does which exalts him,
but what man Would do!
See the King — I would help him but cannot, the
wishes fall through.
Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor
to enrich,
To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would —
knowing which,
I know that my service is perfect. Oh, speak
through me now!

Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst thou — so wilt thou!
So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown —
And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down
One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by no breath,
Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue with death!
As thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved
Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being Beloved!
He who did most, shall bear most; the strongest shall stand the most weak.
'T is the weakness in strength, that I cry for! my flesh, that I seek
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever: a Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!"

XIX

I know not too well how I found my way home in the night.
There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to left and to right,
Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the alive, the aware:

I repressed, I got through them as hardly, as struggli
ngly there,
As a runner beset by the populace famished for news —
Life or death. The whole earth was awakened, hell loosed with her crews;
And the stars of night beat with emotion, and tingled and shot
Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge: but I fainted not,
For the Hand still impelled me at once and supported, suppressed
All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet, and holy behest,
Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the earth sank to rest.
Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had withered from earth —
Not so much, but I saw it die out in the day's tender birth;
In the gathered intensity brought to the gray of the hills;
In the shuddering forests' held breath; in the sudden wind-thrills;
In the startled wild beasts that bore off, each with eye sidling still
Though averted with wonder and dread; in the birds stiff and chill
That rose heavily, as I approached them, made stupid with awe:
E'en the serpent that slid away silent, — he felt the new law.
The same stared in the white humid faces upturned by the flowers;

The same worked in the heart of the cedar and moved the vine-bowers:
And the little brooks witnessing murmured, persistent and low,
With their obstinate, all but hushed voices — "E'en so, it is so!"

MY STAR

1855

All that I know
Of a certain star
Is, it can throw
(Like the angled spar)
Now a dart of red,
Now a dart of blue;
Till my friends have said
They would fain see, too,
My star that dartles the red and the blue!
Then it stops like a bird; like a flower, hangs furled:
They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it.
What matter to me if their star is a world?
Mine has opened its soul to me; therefore I love it.

BY THE FIRE-SIDE

1855

I

How well I know what I mean to do
When the long dark autumn-evenings come:
And where, my soul, is thy pleasant hue?
With the music of all thy voices, dumb
In life's November too!

II

I shall be found by the fire, suppose,
O'er a great wise book as beseemeth age,
While the shutters flap as the cross-wind blows
And I turn the page, and I turn the page,
Not verse now, only prose!

III

Till the young ones whisper, finger on lip,
"There he is at it, deep in Greek:
Now then, or never, out we slip
To cut from the hazels by the creek
A mainmast for our ship!"

IV

I shall be at it indeed, my friends:
Greek puts already on either side
Such a branch-work forth as soon extends
To a vista opening far and wide,
And I pass out where it ends.

V

The outside-frame, like your hazel-trees:
But the inside-archway widens fast,
And a rarer sort succeeds to these,
And we slope to Italy at last
And youth, by green degrees.

VI

I follow wherever I am led,
Knowing so well the leader's hand:
Oh woman-country, wooed not wed,
Loved all the more by earth's male-lands,
Laid to their hearts instead!

VII

Look at the ruined chapel again
Half-way up in the Alpine gorge!
Is that a tower, I point you plain,
Or is it a mill, or an iron-forge
Breaks solitude in vain?

VIII

A turn, and we stand in the heart of things;
The woods are round us, heaped and dim;
From slab to slab how it slips and springs,
The thread of water single and slim,
Through the ravage some torrent brings!

IX

Does it feed the little lake below?
That speck of white just on its marge
Is Pella; see, in the evening-glow,
How sharp the silver spear-heads charge
When Alp meets heaven in snow!

X

On our other side is the straight-up rock;
And a path is kept 'twixt the gorge and it
By boulder-stones where lichens mock
The marks on a moth, and small ferns fit
Their teeth to the polished block.

XI

Oh the sense of the yellow mountain-flowers,
And thorny balls, each three in one,
The chestnuts throw on our path in showers!
For the drop of the woodland fruit 's begun,
These early November hours,

XII

That crimson the creeper's leaf across
 Like a splash of blood, intense, abrupt,
O'er a shield else gold from rim to boss,
 And lay it for show on the fairy-cupped
Elf-needled mat of moss,

XIII

By the rose-flesh mushrooms, undivulged
 Last evening — nay, in to-day's first dew
Yon sudden coral nipple bulged,
 Where a freaked fawn-colored flaky crew
Of toadstools peep indulged.

XIV

And yonder, at foot of the fronting ridge
 That takes the turn to a range beyond,
Is the chapel reached by the one-arched bridge
 Where the water is stopped in a stagnant pond
Danced over by the midge.

XV

The chapel and bridge are of stone alike,
 Blackish-gray and mostly wet;
Cut hemp-stalks steep in the narrow dyke.
 See here again, how the lichens fret
And the roots of the ivy strike!

XVI

Poor little place, where its one priest comes
 On a festa-day, if he comes at all,
To the dozen folk from their scattered homes,
 Gathered within that precinct small
By the dozen ways one roams —

XVII

To drop from the charcoal-burners' huts,
Or climb from the hemp-dressers' low shed,
Leave the grange where the woodman stores his nuts,
Or the wattled cote where the fowlers spread
Their gear on the rock's bare juts.

XVIII

It has some pretension too, this front,
With its bit of fresco half-moon-wise
Set over the porch, Art's early wont:
'T is John in the Desert, I surmise,
But has borne the weather's brunt —

XIX

Not from the fault of the builder, though,
For a pent-house properly projects
Where three carved beams make a certain show,
Dating — good thought of our architect's —
'Five, six, nine, he lets you know.

XX

And all day long a bird sings there,
And a stray sheep drinks at the pond at times;
The place is silent and aware;
It has had its scenes, its joys and crimes,
But that is its own affair.

XXI

My perfect wife, my Leonor,
Oh heart, my own, oh eyes, mine too,
Whom else could I dare look backward for,
With whom beside should I dare pursue
The path gray heads abhor?

XXII

For it leads to a crag's sheer edge with them;
Youth, flowery all the way, there stops —
Not they; age threatens and they contemn,
Till they reach the gulf wherein youth drops,
One inch from life's safe hem!

XXIII

With me, youth led . . . I will speak now,
No longer watch you as you sit
Reading by fire-light, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it,
Mutely, my heart knows how —

XXIV

When, if I think but deep enough,
You are wont to answer, prompt as rhyme;
And you, too, find without rebuff
Response your soul seeks many a time
Piercing its fine flesh-stuff.

XXV

My own, confirm me! If I tread
This path back, is it not in pride
To think how little I dreamed it led
To an age so blest that, by its side,
Youth seems the waste instead?

XXVI

My own, see where the years conduct!
At first, 't was something our two souls
Should mix as mists do; each is sucked
In each now: on, the new stream rolls,
Whatever rocks obstruct.

XXVII

Think, when our one soul understands
The great Word which makes all things new,
When earth breaks up and heaven expands,
How will the change strike me and you
In the house not made with hands?

XXVIII

Oh I must feel your brain prompt mine,
Your heart anticipate my heart,
You must be just before, in fine,
See and make me see, for your part,
New depths of the divine!

XXIX

But who could have expected this
When we two drew together first
Just for the obvious human bliss,
To satisfy life's daily thirst
With a thing men seldom miss?

XXX

Come back with me to the first of all,
Let us lean and love it over again,
Let us now forget and now recall,
Break the rosary in a pearly rain,
And gather what we let fall!

XXXI

What did I say? — that a small bird sings
All day long, save when a brown pair
Of hawks from the wood float with wide wings
Strained to a bell: 'gainst noon-day glare
You count the streaks and rings.

XXXII

But at afternoon or almost eve
'T is better; then the silence grows
To that degree, you half believe
It must get rid of what it knows,
Its bosom does so heave.

XXXIII

Hither we walked then, side by side,
Arm in arm and cheek to cheek,
And still I questioned or replied,
While my heart, convulsed to really speak,
Lay choking in its pride.

XXXIV

Silent the crumbling bridge we cross,
And pity and praise the chapel sweet,
And care about the fresco's loss,
And wish for our souls a like retreat,
And wonder at the moss.

XXXV

Stoop and kneel on the settle under,
Look through the window's grated square:
Nothing to see! For fear of plunder,
The cross is down and the altar bare,
As if thieves don't fear thunder.

XXXVI

We stoop and look in through the grate,
See the little porch and rustic door,
Read duly the dead builder's date;
Then cross the bridge that we crossed before,
Take the path again — but wait!

XXXVII

Oh moment, one and infinite!
The water slips o'er stock and stone;
The West is tender, hardly bright:
How gray at once is the evening grown —
One star, its chrysolite!

XXXVIII

We two stood there with never a third,
But each by each, as each knew well:
The sights we saw and the sounds we heard,
The lights and the shades made up a spell
Till the trouble grew and stirred.

XXXIX

Oh, the little more, and how much it is!
And the little less, and what worlds away!
How a sound shall quicken content to bliss,
Or a breath suspend the blood's best play,
And life be a proof of this!

XL

Had she willed it, still had stood the screen
So slight, so sure, 'twixt my love and her:
I could fix her face with a guard between,
And find her soul as when friends confer,
Friends — lovers that might have been.

XLI

For my heart had a touch of the woodland-time,
Wanting to sleep now over its best.
Shake the whole tree in the summer-prime,
But bring to the last leaf no such test!
"Hold the last fast!" runs the rhyme.

XLII

For a chance to make your little much,
To gain a lover and lose a friend,
Venture the tree and a myriad such,
When nothing you mar but the year can mend:
But a last leaf — fear to touch!

XLIII

Yet should it unfasten itself and fall
Eddying down till it find your face
At some slight wind — best chance of all!
Be your heart henceforth its dwelling-place
You trembled to forestall!

XLIV

Worth how well, those dark gray eyes,
That hair so dark and dear, how worth
That a man should strive and agonize,
And taste a veriest hell on earth
For the hope of such a prize!

XLV

You might have turned and tried a man,
Set him a space to weary and wear,
And prove which suited more your plan,
His best of hope or his worst despair,
Yet end as he began.

XLVI

But you spared me this, like the heart you are,
And filled my empty heart at a word.
If two lives join, there is oft a scar,
They are one and one, with a shadowy third;
One near one is too far.

XLVII

A moment after, and hands unseen
Were hanging the night around us fast;
But we knew that a bar was broken between
Life and life: we were mixed at last
In spite of the mortal screen.

XLVIII

The forests had done it; there they stood;
We caught for a moment the powers at play:
They had mingled us so, for once and good,
Their work was done — we might go or stay,
They relapsed to their ancient mood.

XLIX

How the world is made for each of us!
How all we perceive and know in it
Tends to some moment's product thus,
When a soul declares itself — to wit
By its fruit, the thing it does!

Be hate that fruit or love that fruit,
It forwards the general deed of man,
And each of the Many helps to recruit
The life of the race by a general plan:
Each living his own, to boot.

LI

I am named and known by that moment's feat;
There took my station and degree;
So grew my own small life complete,
As nature obtained her best of me —
One born to love you, sweet!

LII

And to watch you sink by the fire-side now
Back again, as you mutely sit
Musing by fire-light, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it,
Yonder, my heart knows how!

LIII

So, earth has gained by one man the more,
And the gain of earth must be heaven's gain too;
And the whole is well worth thinking o'er
When autumn comes: which I mean to do
One day, as I said before.

ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND

1855

I

My love, this is the bitterest, that thou —
Who art all truth, and who dost love me now
As thine eyes say, as thy voice breaks to say —
Shouldst love so truly, and couldst love me still
A whole long life through, had but love its will,
Would death that leads me from thee brook delay.

II

I have but to be by thee, and thy hand
Will never let mine go, nor heart withstand
The beating of my heart to reach its place.
When shall I look for thee and feel thee gone?
When cry for the old comfort and find none?
Never, I know! Thy soul is in thy face.

III

Oh, I should fade — 't is willed so! Might I save,
Gladly I would, whatever beauty gave
Joy to thy sense, for that was precious too.
It is not to be granted. But the soul
Whence the love comes, all ravage leaves that whole;
Vainly the flesh fades; soul makes all things new.

IV

It would not be because my eye grew dim
Thou couldst not find the love there, thanks to Him
Who never is dishonored in the spark
He gave us from his fire of fires, and bade
Remember whence it sprang, nor be afraid
While that burns on, though all the rest grow dark.

V

So, how thou wouldst be perfect, white and clean
Outside as inside, soul and soul's demesne
Alike, this body given to show it by!
Oh, three-parts through the worst of life's abyss,
What plaudits from the next world after this,
Couldst thou repeat a stroke and gain the sky!

VI

And is it not the bitterer to think
That, disengage our hands and thou wilt sink
Although thy love was love in very deed?
I know that nature! Pass a festive day,
Thou dost not throw its relic-flower away
Nor bid its music's loitering echo speed.

VII

Thou let'st the stranger's glove lie where it fell;
If old things remain old things all is well,
For thou art grateful as becomes man best:
And hadst thou only heard me play one tune,
Or viewed me from a window, not so soon
With thee would such things fade as with the rest.

VIII

I seem to see! We meet and part; 't is brief;
The book I opened keeps a folded leaf,
The very chair I sat on, breaks the rank;
That is a portrait of me on the wall —
Three lines, my face comes at so slight a call:
And for all this, one little hour to thank!

IX

But now, because the hour through years was fixed,
Because our inmost beings met and mixed,
Because thou once hast loved me — wilt thou dare
Say to thy soul and Who may list beside,
"Therefore she is immortally my bride;
Chance cannot change my love, nor time impair.

"So, what if in the dusk of life that 's left,
I, a tired traveller of my sun bereft,
Look from my path when, mimicking the same,
The fire-fly glimpses past me, come and gone?
— Where was it till the sunset? where anon
It will be at the sunrise! What 's to blame?"

XI

Is it so helpful to thee? Canst thou take
The mimic up, nor, for the true thing's sake,
Put gently by such efforts at a beam?
Is the remainder of the way so long,
Thou need'st the little solace, thou the strong?
Watch out thy watch, let weak ones doze and dream!

XII

— Ah, but the fresher faces! "Is it true,"
Thou 'lt ask, "some eyes are beautiful and new?
Some hair, — how can one choose but grasp such wealth?
And if a man would press his lips to lips
Fresh as the wilding hedge-rose-cup there slips
The dew-drop out of, must it be by stealth?

XIII

"It cannot change the love still kept for Her,
More than if such a picture I prefer
Passing a day with, to a room's bare side:
The painted form takes nothing she possessed,
Yet, while the Titian's Venus lies at rest,
A man looks. Once more, what is there to chide?'

XIV

So must I see, from where I sit and watch,
My own self sell myself, my hand attach
Its warrant to the very thefts from me —
Thy singleness of soul that made me proud,
Thy purity of heart I loved aloud,
Thy man's-truth I was bold to bid God see!

XV

Love so, then, if thou wilt! Give all thou canst
Away to the new faces — disentranced,
(Say it and think it) obdurate no more:
Re-issue looks and words from the old mint,
Pass them afresh, no matter whose the print
Image and superscription once they bore!

XVI

Re-coin thyself and give it them to spend, —
It all comes to the same thing at the end,
Since mine thou wast, mine art and mine shalt be,
Faithful or faithless, sealing up the sum
Or lavish of my treasure, thou must come
Back to the heart's place here I keep for thee!

XVII

Only, why should it be with stain at all?
Why must I, 'twixt the leaves of coronal,
Put any kiss of pardon on thy brow?
Why need the other women know so much,
And talk together, "Such the look and such
The smile he used to love with, then as now!"

XVIII

Might I die last and show thee! Should I find
Such hardship in the few years left behind,
If free to take and light my lamp, and go
Into thy tomb, and shut the door and sit,
Seeing thy face on those four sides of it
The better that they are so blank, I know!

XIX

Why, time was what I wanted, to turn o'er
Within my mind each look, get more and more
 By heart each word, too much to learn at first;
And join thee all the fitter for the pause
'Neath the low doorway's lintel. That were cause
 For lingering, though thou calledst, if I durst!

XX

And yet thou art the nobler of us two:
What dare I dream of, that thou canst not do,
 Outstripping my ten small steps with one stride?
I 'll say then, here 's a trial and a task —
Is it to bear? — if easy, I 'll not ask:
 Though love fail, I can trust on in thy pride.

XXI

Pride? — when those eyes forestall the life behind
The death I have to go through! — when I find,
 Now that I want thy help most, all of thee!
What did I fear? Thy love shall hold me fast
Until the little minute's sleep is past
 And I wake saved. — And yet it will not be!

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA

1855

I

I WONDER do you feel to-day
 As I have felt since, hand in hand,
We sat down on the grass, to stray
 In spirit better through the land,
This morn of Rome and May?

II

For me, I touched a thought, I know,
Has tantalized me many times,
(Like turns of thread the spiders throw
Mocking across our path) for rhymes
To catch at and let go.

III

Help me to hold it! First it left
The yellowing fennel, run to seed
There, branching from the brickwork's cleft,
Some old tomb's ruin: yonder weed
Took up the floating weft,

IV

Where one small orange cup amassed
Five beetles, — blind and green they grope
Among the honey-meal: and last,
Everywhere on the grassy slope
I traced it. Hold it fast!

V

The champaign with its endless fleece
Of feathery grasses everywhere!
Silence and passion, joy and peace,
An everlasting wash of air —
Rome's ghost since her decease.

VI

Such life here, through such lengths of hours,
Such miracles performed in play,
Such primal naked forms of flowers,
Such letting nature have her way
While heaven looks from its towers!

VII

How say you? Let us, O my dove,
Let us be unashamed of soul,
As earth lies bare to heaven above!
How is it under our control
To love or not to love?

VIII

I would that you were all to me,
You that are just so much, no more.
Nor yours nor mine, nor slave nor free!
Where does the fault lie? What the core
O' the wound, since wound must be?

IX

I would I could adopt your will,
See with your eyes, and set my heart
Beating by yours, and drink my fill
At your soul's springs, — your part my part
In life, for good and ill.

X

No. I yearn upward, touch you close,
Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,
Catch your soul's warmth, — I pluck the rose
And love it more than tongue can speak —
Then the good minute goes.

XI

Already how am I so far
Out of that minute? Must I go
Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,
Onward, whenever light winds blow,
Fixed by no friendly star?

XII

Just when I seemed about to learn!
Where is the thread now? Off again!
The old trick! Only I discern —
Infinite passion, and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn.

MISCONCEPTIONS

1855

I

This is a spray the Bird clung to,
Making it blossom with pleasure,
Ere the high tree-top she sprung to,
Fit for her nest and her treasure.
Oh, what a hope beyond measure
Was the poor spray's, which the flying feet hung to, —
So to be singled out, built in, and sung to!

II

This is a heart the Queen leant on,
Thrilled in a minute erratic,
Ere the true bosom she bent on,
Meet for love's regal dalmatic.
Oh, what a fancy ecstatic
Was the poor heart's, ere the wanderer went on —
Love to be saved for it, proffered to, spent on!

A SERENADE AT THE VILLA

1855

I

THAT was I, you heard last night,
When there rose no moon at all,
Nor, to pierce the strained and tight
Tent of heaven, a planet small:
Life was dead and so was light.

II

Not a twinkle from the fly,
Not a glimmer from the worm;
When the crickets stopped their cry,
When the owls forbore a term,
You heard music; that was I

III

Earth turned in her sleep with pain,
Sultrily suspired for proof:
In at heaven and out again,
Lightning! — where it broke the roof,
Bloodlike, some few drops of rain.

IV

What they could my words expressed,
O my love, my all, my one!
Singing helped the verses best,
And when singing's best was done,
To my lute I left the rest.

V

So wore night; the East was gray,
White the broad-faced hemlock-flowers:
There would be another day;
Ere its first of heavy hours
Found me, I had passed away.

VI

What became of all the hopes,
Words and song and lute as well?
Say, this struck you — "When life gropes
Feebly for the path where fell
Light last on the evening slopes,

VII

"One friend in that path shall be,
To secure my step from wrong;
One to count night day for me,
Patient through the watches long,
Serving most with none to see."

VIII

Never say — as something bodes —
"So, the worst has yet a worse!
When life halts 'neath double loads,
Better the taskmaster's curse
Than such music on the roads!

IX

"When no moon succeeds the sun,
Nor can pierce the midnight's tent
Any star, the smallest one,
While some drops, where lightning rent,
Show the final storm begun —

X

"When the fire-fly hides its spot,
When the garden-voices fail
In the darkness thick and hot —,
Shall another voice avail,
That shape be where these are not?

XI

"Has some plague a longer lease,
Proffering its help uncouth?
Can't one even die in peace?
As one shuts one's eyes on youth,
Is that face the last one sees?"

XII

Oh how dark your villa was,
Windows fast and obdurate!
How the garden grudged me grass
Where I stood — the iron gate
Ground its teeth to let me pass!

ONE WAY OF LOVE

1855

I

All June I bound the rose in sheaves.
Now, rose by rose, I strip the leaves
And strew them where Pauline may pass.
She will not turn aside? Alas!
Let them lie. Suppose they die?
The chance was they might take her eye.

II

How many a month I strove to suit
These stubborn fingers to the lute!
To-day I venture all I know.
She will not hear my music? So!
Break the string; fold music's wing:
Suppose Pauline had bade me sing!

III

My whole life long I learned to love.
This hour my utmost art I prove
And speak my passion — heaven or hell?
She will not give me heaven? 'T is well!
Lose who may — I still can say,
Those who win heaven, blest are they!

ANOTHER WAY OF LOVE

1855

I

JUNE was not over
Though past the full,
And the best of her roses
Had yet to blow,
When a man I know
(But shall not discover,
Since ears are dull,
And time discloses)
Turned him and said with a man's true air,
Half sighing a smile in a yawn, as 't were, —
"If I tire of your June, will she greatly care?"

II

Well, dear, in-doors with you!
True! serene deadness
Tries a man's temper.
What 's in the blossom
June wears on her bosom?
Can it clear scores with you?
Sweetness and redness
Eadem semper!
Go, let me care for it greatly or slightly!
If June mend her bower now, your hand left unsightly
By plucking the roses, — my June will do rightly.

III

And after, for pastime,
If June be refulgent
With flowers in completeness,
All petals, no prickles,
Delicious as trickles
Of wine poured at mass-time, —
And choose One indulgent
To redness and sweetness:
Or if, with experience of man and of spider,
June use my June-lightning, the strong insect-ridder,
And stop the fresh film-work, — why, June will consider.

A PRETTY WOMAN

1855

I

That fawn-skin-dappled hair of hers,
And the blue eye
Dear and dewy,
And that infantine fresh air of hers!

II

To think men cannot take you, Sweet,
And enfold you,
Ay, and hold you,
And so keep you what they make you, Sweet!

III

You like us for a glance, you know —
For a word's sake
Or a sword's sake,
All 's the same, whate'er the chance, you know.

IV

And in turn we make you ours, we say —
You and youth too,
Eyes and mouth too,
All the face composed of flowers, we say.

V

All 's our own, to make the most of, Sweet —
Sing and say for,
Watch and pray for,
Keep a secret or go boast of, Sweet!

VI

But for loving, why, you would not, Sweet,
Though we prayed you,
Paid you, brayed you
In a mortar — for you could not, Sweet!

VII

So, we leave the sweet face fondly there:
Be its beauty
Its sole duty!
Let all hope of grace beyond, lie there!

VIII

And while the face lies quiet there,
Who shall wonder
That I ponder
A conclusion? I will try it there.

IX

As, — why must one, for the love foregone,
Scout mere liking?
Thunder-striking
Earth, — the heaven, we looked above for, gone!

X

Why, with beauty, needs there money be,
Love with liking?
Crush the fly-king
In his gauze, because no honey-bee?

XI

May not liking to so simple-sweet,
If love grew there
'T would undo there
All that breaks the cheek to dimples sweet?

XII

Is the creature too imperfect, say?
Would you mend it
And so end it?
Since not all addition perfects aye!

XIII

Or is it of its kind, perhaps,
Just perfection —
Whence, rejection
Of a grace not to its mind, perhaps?

XIV

Shall we burn up, tread that face at once
Into tinder,
And so hinder
Sparks from kindling all the place at once?

XV

Or else kiss away one's soul on her?
Your love-fancies!
— A sick man sees
Truer, when his hot eyes roll on her!

XVI

Thus the craftsman thinks to grace the rose, —
Plucks a mould-flower
For his gold flower,
Uses fine things that efface the rose:

XVII

Rosy rubies make its cup more rose,
Precious metals
Ape the petals, —
Last, some old king locks it up, morose!

XVIII

Then how grace a rose? I know a way!
Leave it, rather.
Must you gather?
Smell, kiss, wear it—at last, throw away!

RESPECTABILITY

1855

I

Dear, had the world in its caprice
Deigned to proclaim "I know you both,
Have recognized your plighted troth,
Am sponsor for you: live in peace!"—
How many precious months and years
Of youth had passed, that speed so fast,
Before we found it out at last,
The world, and what it fears?

II

How much of priceless life were spent
With men that every virtue decks,
And women models of their sex,
Society's true ornament,—
Ere we dared wander, nights like this,
Thro' wind and rain, and watch the Seine,
And feel the Boulevart break again
To warmth and light and bliss?

III

I know! the world proscribes not love;
Allows my finger to caress

Your lips' contour and downiness,
Provided it supply a glove.
The world's good word! — the Institute!
Guizot receives Montalembert!
Eh? Down the court three lampions flare:
Put forward your best foot!

LOVE IN A LIFE

1855

I

Room after room,
I hunt the house through
We inhabit together.
Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt find her —
Next time, herself! — not the trouble behind her
Left in the curtain, the couch's perfume!
As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath blossomed anew:
Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave of her feather.

II

Yet the day wears,
And door succeeds door;
I try the fresh fortune —
Range the wide house from the wing to the centre.
Still the same chance! she goes out as I enter.
Spend my whole day in the quest, — who cares?
But 't is twilight, you see, — with such suites to explore,
Such closets to search, such alcoves to importune!

LIFE IN A LOVE

1855

Escape me?
Never —
Beloved!
While I am I, and you are you,
So long as the world contains us both,
Me the loving and you the loth,
While the one eludes, must the other pursue.
My life is a fault at last, I fear:
It seems too much like a fate, indeed!
Though I do my best I shall scarce succeed.
But what if I fail of my purpose here?
It is but to keep the nerves at strain,
To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,
And, baffled, get up and begin again, —
So the chace takes up one's life, that 's all.
While, look but once from your farthest bound
At me so deep in the dust and dark,
No sooner the old hope goes to ground
Than a new one, straight to the self-same mark,
I shape me —
Ever
Removed!

IN THREE DAYS

1855

I

So, I shall see her in three days
And just one night, but nights are short,
Then two long hours, and that is morn.
See how I come, unchanged, unworn!
Feel, where my life broke off from thine,
How fresh the splinters keep and fine, —
Only a touch and we combine!

II

Too long, this time of year, the days!
But nights, at least the nights are short.
As night shows where her one moon is,
A hand's-breadth of pure light and bliss,
So life's night gives my lady birth
And my eyes hold her! What is worth
The rest of heaven, the rest of earth?

III

O loaded curls, release your store
Of warmth and scent, as once before
The tingling hair did, lights and darks
Outbreaking into fairy sparks,
When under curl and curl I pried
After the warmth and scent inside,
Thro' lights and darks how manifold —
The dark inspired, the light controlled!
As early Art embrowns the gold.

IV

What great fear, should one say, "Three days
That change the world might change as well
Your fortune; and if joy delays,
Be happy that no worse befell!"
What small fear, if another says,
"Three days and one short night beside
May throw no shadow on your ways;
But years must teem with change untried,
With chance not easily defied,
With an end somewhere undescried."
No fear! — or if a fear be born
This minute, it dies out in scorn.
Fear? I shall see her in three days
And one night, now the nights are short,
Then just two hours, and that is morn.

IN A YEAR

1855

I

Never any more,
While I live,
Need I hope to see his face
As before.
Once his love grown chill,
Mine may strive:
Bitterly we re-embrace,
Single still.

II

Was it something said,
Something done,

Vexed him? was it touch of hand,
 Turn of head?
Strange! that very way
 Love begun:
I as little understand
 Love's decay.

III

When I sewed or drew,
 I recall
How he looked as if I sung,
 — Sweetly too.
If I spoke a word,
 First of all
Up his cheek the color sprung,
 Then he heard.

IV

Sitting by my side,
 At my feet,
So he breathed but air I breathed,
 Satisfied!
I, too, at love's brim
 Touched the sweet:
I would die if death bequeathed
 Sweet to him.

V

"Speak, I love thee best!"
 He exclaimed:
"Let thy love my own foretell!"
 I confessed:

"Clasp my heart on thine
 Now unblamed,
Since upon thy soul as well
 Hangeth mine!"

VI

Was it wrong to own,
 Being truth?
Why should all the giving prove
 His alone?
I had wealth and ease,
 Beauty, youth:
Since my lover gave me love,
 I gave these.

VII

That was all I meant,
 — To be just,
And the passion I had raised,
 To content.
Since he chose to change
 Gold for dust,
If I gave him what he praised
 Was it strange?

VIII

Would he loved me yet,
 On and on,
While I found some way undreamed
 — Paid my debt!
Gave more life and more,
 Till, all gone,
He should smile "She never seemed
 Mine before.

IX

"What, she felt the while,
Must I think?
Love 's so different with us men!"
He should smile:
"Dying for my sake —
White and pink!
Can't we touch these bubbles then
But they break?"

X

Dear, the pang is brief,
Do thy part,
Have thy pleasure! How perplexed
Grows belief!
Well, this cold clay clod
Was man's heart:
Crumble it, and what comes next?
Is it God?

WOMEN AND ROSES

1855

I

I DREAM of a red-rose tree.
And which of its roses three
Is the dearest rose to me?

II

Round and round, like a dance of snow
In a dazzling drift, as its guardians, go
Floating the women faded for ages,
Sculptured in stone, on the poet's pages.

Then follow women fresh and gay,
Living and loving and loved to-day.
Last, in the rear, flee the multitude of maidens,
Beauties yet unborn. And all, to one cadence,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

III

Dear rose, thy term is reached,
Thy leaf hangs loose and bleached:
Bees pass it unimpeached.

IV

Stay then, stoop, since I cannot climb,
You, great shapes of the antique time!
How shall I fix you, fire you, freeze you,
Break my heart at your feet to please you?
Oh, to possess and be possessed!
Hearts that beat 'neath each pallid breast!
Once but of love, the poesy, the passion,
Drink but once and die! — In vain, the same fashion,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

V

Dear rose, thy joy 's undimmed,
Thy cup is ruby-rimmed,
Thy cup's heart nectar-brimmed.

VI

Deep, as drops from a statue's plinth
The bee sucked in by the hyacinth,
So will I bury me while burning,
Quench like him at a plunge my yearning,

Eyes in your eyes, lips on your lips!
Fold me fast where the cincture slips,
Prison all my soul in eternities of pleasure,
Girdle me for once! But no — the old measure,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

VII

Dear rose without a thorn,
Thy bud 's the babe unborn:
First streak of a new morn.

VIII

Wings, lend wings for the cold, the clear!
What is far conquers what is near.
Roses will bloom nor want beholders,
Sprung from the dust where our flesh moulders.
What shall arrive with the cycle's change?
A novel grace and a beauty strange.
I will make an Eve be the artist that began her,
Shaped her to his mind! — Alas! in like manner
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

BEFORE

1855

I

Let them fight it out, friend! things have gone too far.
God must judge the couple: leave them as they are
— Whichever one 's the guiltless, to his glory,
And whichever one the guilt 's with, to my story!

II

Why, you would not bid men, sunk in such a slough,
Strike no arm out further, stick and stink as now,
Leaving right and wrong to settle the embroilment,
Heaven with snaky hell, in torture and entoilment?

III

Who 's the culprit of them? How must he conceive
God — the queen he caps to, laughing in his sleeve,
"'T is but decent to profess oneself beneath her:
Still, one must not be too much in earnest, either!"

IV

Better sin the whole sin, sure that God observes;
Then go live his life out! Life will try his nerves,
When the sky, which noticed all, makes no disclosure,
And the earth keeps up her terrible composure.

V

Let him pace at pleasure, past the walls of rose,
Pluck their fruits when grape-trees graze him as he goes!
For he 'gins to guess the purpose of the garden,
With the sly mute thing, beside there, for a warden.

VI

What 's the leopard-dog-thing, constant at his side,
A leer and lie in every eye of its obsequious hide?
When will come an end to all the mock obeisance,
And the price appear that pays for the misfeasance?

VII

So much for the culprit. Who 's the martyred man?
Let him bear one stroke more, for be sure he can!

He that strove thus evil's lump with good to leaven,
Let him give his blood at last and get his heaven!

VIII

All or nothing, stake it! Trusts he God or no?
Thus far and no farther? farther? be it so!
Now, enough of your chicane of prudent pauses,
Sage provisos, sub-intents and saving-clauses!

IX

Ah, "forgive" you bid him? While God's champion lives,
Wrong shall be resisted: dead, why, he forgives.
But you must not end my friend ere you begin him;
Evil stands not crowned on earth, while breath is in him.

X

Once more — Will the wronger, at this last of all,
Dare to say, "I did wrong," rising in his fall?
No?—Let go, then! Both the fighters to their places!
While I count three, step you back as many paces!

AFTER

1855

TAKE the cloak from his face, and at first
Let the corpse do its worst!

How he lies in his rights of a man!
Death has done all death can.
And, absorbed in the new life he leads,
He recks not, he heeds
Nor his wrong nor my vengeance; both strike
On his senses alike,

And are lost in the solemn and strange
Surprise of the change.

Ha, what avails death to erase
His offence, my disgrace?
I would we were boys as of old
In the field, by the fold:
His outrage, God's patience, man's scorn
Were so easily borne!

I stand here now, he lies in his place:
Cover the face!

THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL

A PICTURE AT FANO

1855

I

Dear and great Angel, wouldst thou only leave
That child, when thou hast done with him, for me!
Let me sit all the day here, that when eve
Shall find performed thy special ministry,
And time come for departure, thou, suspending
Thy flight, mayst see another child for tending,
Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

II

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no more,
From where thou standest now, to where I gaze,
— And suddenly my head is covered o'er
With those wings, white above the child who prays
Now on that tomb — and I shall feel thee guarding
Me, out of all the world; for me, discarding
Yon heaven thy home, that waits and opes its door.

III

I would not look up thither past thy head
Because the door opes, like that child, I know,
For I should have thy gracious face instead,
Thou bird of God! And wilt thou bend me low
Like him, and lay, like his, my hands together,
And lift them up to pray, and gently tether
Me, as thy lamb there, with thy garment's spread?

IV

If this was ever granted, I would rest
My head beneath thine, while thy healing hands
Close-covered both my eyes beside thy breast,
Pressing the brain, which too much thought expands,
Back to its proper size again, and smoothing
Distortion down till every nerve had soothing,
And all lay quiet, happy and suppressed.

V

How soon all worldly wrong would be repaired!
I think how I should view the earth and skies
And sea, when once again my brow was bared
After thy healing, with such different eyes.
O world, as God has made it! All is beauty:
And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.
What further may be sought for or declared?

VI

Guercino drew this angel I saw teach
(Alfred, dear friend!) — that little child to pray,
Holding the little hands up, each to each
Pressed gently, — with his own head turned away

The Guardian Angel

(From the painting by Guercino)

"Guercino drew this angel I saw teach
(Alfred, dear friend!) that little child to pray,
Holding the little hands up, each to each
Pressed gently, — with his own head turned away."

Dramatic Lyrics.



Over the earth where so much lay before him
Of work to do, though heaven was opening o'er him,
And he was left at Fano by the beach.

VII

We were at Fano, and three times we went
To sit and see him in his chapel there,
And drink his beauty to our soul's content
— My angel with me too: and since I care
For dear Guercino's fame (to which in power
And glory comes this picture for a dower,
Fraught with a pathos so magnificent) —

VIII

And since he did not work thus earnestly
At all times, and has else endured some wrong —
I took one thought his picture struck from me,
And spread it out, translating it to song.
My love is here. Where are you, dear old friend?
How rolls the Wairoa at your world's far end?
This is Ancona, yonder is the sea.

MEMORABILIA

1855

I

Ah, did you once see Shelley plain,
And did he stop and speak to you
And did you speak to him again?
How strange it seems and new!

II

But you were living before that,
 And also you are living after;
And the memory I started at —
 My starting moves your laughter.

III

I crossed a moor, with a name of its own
 And a certain use in the world no doubt,
Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone
 'Mid the blank miles round about:

IV

For there I picked up on the heather
 And there I put inside my breast
A moulted feather, an eagle-feather!
 Well, I forget the rest.

POPULARITY

1855

I

Stand still, true poet that you are!
 I know you; let me try and draw you.
Some night you 'll fail us: when afar
 You rise, remember one man saw you,
Knew you, and named a star!

II

My star, God's glow-worm! Why extend
 That loving hand of his which leads you

Yet locks you safe from end to end
Of this dark world, unless he needs you,
Just saves your light to spend?

III

His clenched hand shall unclose at last,
I know, and let out all the beauty:
My poet holds the future fast,
Accepts the coming ages' duty,
Their present for this past.

IV

That day, the earth's feast-master's brow
Shall clear, to God the chalice raising;
"Others give best at first, but thou
Forever set'st our table praising,
Keep'st the good wine till now!"

Meantime, I 'll draw you as you stand,
With few or none to watch and wonder:
I 'll say — a fisher, on the sand
By Tyre the old, with ocean-plunder,
A netful, brought to land.

VI

Who has not heard how Tyrian shells
Enclosed the blue, that dye of dyes
Whereof one drop worked miracles,
And colored like Astarte's eyes
Raw silk the merchant sells?

VII

And each bystander of them all
Could criticise, and quote tradition

How depths of blue sublimed some pall
— To get which, pricked a king's ambition;
Worth sceptre, crown and ball.

VIII

Yet there 's the dye, in that rough mesh,
The sea has only just o'erwhispered!
Live whelks, each lip's beard dripping fresh,
As if they still the water's lisp heard
Through foam the rock-weeds thresh.

IX

Enough to furnish Solomon
Such hangings for his cedar-house,
That, when gold-robed he took the throne
In that abyss of blue, the Spouse
Might swear his presence shone

X

Most like the centre-spike of gold
Which burns deep in the blue-bell's womb,
What time, with ardors manifold,
The bee goes singing to her groom,
Drunken and overbold.

XI

Mere conchs! not fit for warp or woof!
Till cunning come to pound and squeeze
And clarify, — refine to proof
The liquor filtered by degrees,
While the world stands aloof.

XII

And there 's the extract, flasked and fine,
 And priced and salable at last!
And Hobbs, Nobbs, Stokes and Nokes combine
 To paint the future from the past,
Put blue into their line.

XIII

Hobbs hints blue, — straight he turtle eats:
 Nobbs prints blue, — claret crowns his cup:
Nokes outlares Stokes in azure feats, —
 Both gorge. Who fished the murex up?
What porridge had John Keats?

MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-GOTHA

1855

I

Hist, but a word, fair and soft!
 Forth and be judged, Master Hugues!
Answer the question I 've put you so oft:
 What do you mean by your mountainous fugues?
See, we 're alone in the loft, —

II

I, the poor organist here,
 Hugues, the composer of note,
Dead though, and done with, this many a year:
 Let 's have a colloquy, something to quote,
Make the world prick up its ear!

III

See, the church empties apace:
 Fast they extinguish the lights.
Hallo there, sacristan! Five minutes' grace!
 Here 's a crank pedal wants setting to rights,
Balks one of holding the base.

IV

See, our huge house of the sounds,
 Hushing its hundreds at once,
Bids the last loiterer back to his bounds!
 — O you may challenge them, not a response
Get the church-saints on their rounds!

V

(Saints go their rounds, who shall doubt?
 — March, with the moon to admire,
Up nave, down chancel, turn transept about,
 Supervise all betwixt pavement and spire,
Put rats and mice to the rout —

VI

Aloys and Jurien and Just —
 Order things back to their place,
Have a sharp eye lest the candlesticks rust,
 Rub the church-plate, darn the sacrament-lace,
Clear the desk-velvet of dust.)

VII

Here 's your book, younger folks shelve!
 Played I not off-hand and runningly,

Just now, your masterpiece, hard number twelve?
Here 's what should strike, could one handle it cunningly:
Help the axe, give it a helve!

VIII

Page after page as I played,
Every bar's rest, where one wipes
Sweat from one's brow, I looked up and surveyed,
O'er my three claviers, yon forest of pipes
Whence you still peeped in the shade.

IX

Sure you were wishful to speak?
You, with brow ruled like a score,
Yes, and eyes buried in pits on each cheek,
Like two great breves, as they wrote them of yore,
Each side that bar, your straight beak!

X

Sure you said — "Good, the mere notes!
Still, couldst thou take my intent,
Know what procured me our Company's votes —
A master were lauded and sciolists shent,
Parted the sheep from the goats!"

XI

Well then, speak up, never flinch!
Quick, ere my candle 's a snuff
— Burnt, do you see? to its uttermost inch —
I believe in you, but that 's not enough:
Give my conviction a clinch!

XII

First you deliver your phrase
— Nothing propound, that I see,
Fit in itself for much blame or much praise —
Answered no less, where no answer needs be:
Off start the Two on their ways

XIII

Straight must a Third interpose,
Volunteer needlessly help;
In strikes a Fourth, a Fifth thrusts in his nose,
So the cry 's open, the kennel 's a-yelp,
Argument 's hot to the close.

XIV

One dissertates, he is candid;
Two must discept, — has distinguished;
Three helps the couple, if ever yet man did;
Four protests; Five makes a dart at the thing wished:
Back to One, goes the case bandied.

XV

One says his say with a difference;
More of expounding, explaining!
All now is wrangle, abuse, and vociferance;
Now there 's a truce, all 's subdued, self-restraining:
Five, though, stands out all the stiffer hence.

XVI

One is incisive, corrosive;
Two retorts, nettled, curt, crepitant;
Three makes rejoinder, expansive, explosive;
Four overbears them all, strident and strepitant:
Five . . . O Danaides, O Sieve!

XVII

Now, they ply axes and crowbars;
Now, they prick pins at a tissue
Fine as a skein of the casuist Escobar's
Worked on the bone of a lie. To what issue?
Where is our gain at the Two-bars?

XVIII

Est fuga, volvitur rota.
On we drift: where looms the dim port?
One, Two, Three, Four, Five, contribute their quota;
Something is gained, if one caught but the import—
Show it us, Hugues of Saxe-Gotha!

XIX

What with affirming, denying,
Holding, risposting, subjoining,
All 's like . . . it 's like . . . for an instance I 'm trying . . .
There! See our roof, its gilt moulding and groining
Under those spider-webs lying!

XX

So your fugue broadens and thickens,
Greatens and deepens and lengthens,
Till we exclaim — "But where 's music, the dickens?
Blot ye the gold, while your spider-web strengthens
— Blacked to the stoutest of tickens?"

XXI

I for man's effort am zealous:
Prove me such censure unfounded!

Seems it surprising a lover grows jealous —
 Hopes 't was for something, his organ-pipes sounded,
Tiring three boys at the bellows?

XXII

Is it your moral of Life?
 Such a web, simple and subtle,
Weave we on earth here in impotent strife,
 Backward and forward each throwing his shuttle,
Death ending all with a knife?

XXIII

Over our heads truth and nature —
 Still our life's zigzags and dodges,
Ins and outs, weaving a new legislature —
 God's gold just shining its last where that lodges,
Palled beneath man's usurpature.

XXIV

So we o'ershroud stars and roses,
 Cherub and trophy and garland;
Nothings grow something which quietly closes
 Heaven's earnest eye: not a glimpse of the far land
Gets through our comments and glozes.

XXV

Ah but traditions, inventions,
 (Say we and make up a visage)
So many men with such various intentions,
 Down the past ages, must know more than this age!
Leave we the web its dimensions!

XXVI

Who thinks Hugues wrote for the deaf,
 Proved a mere mountain in labor?
Better submit; try again; what 's the clef?
 'Faith, 't is no trifle for pipe and for tabor —
Four flats, the minor in F.

XXVII

Friend, your fugue taxes the finger:
 Learning it once, who would lose it?
Yet all the while a misgiving will linger,
 Truth 's golden o'er us although we refuse it —
Nature, thro' cobwebs we string her.

XXVIII

Hugues! I advise *meâ pœnâ*
 (Counterpoint glares like a Gorgon)
Bid One, Two, Three, Four, Five, clear the arena!
 Say the word, straight I unstop the full-organ,
Blare out the *mode Palestrina.*

XXIX

While in the roof, if I 'm right there,
 . . . Lo you, the wick in the socket!
Hallo, you sacristan, show us a light there!
 Down it dips, gone like a rocket.
What, you want, do you, to come unawares,
Sweeping the church up for first morning-prayers,
And find a poor devil has ended his cares
At the foot of your rotten-runged rat-riddled stairs?
 Do I carry the moon in my pocket?

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

184— 185—

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

1842

I

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon:
A mile or so away,
On a little mound, Napoleon
Stood on our storming-day;
With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,
Legs wide, arms locked behind,
As if to balance the prone brow
Oppressive with its mind.

II

Just as perhaps he mused "My plans
That soar, to earth may fall,
Let once my army-leader Lannes
Waver at yonder wall," —
Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew
A rider, bound on bound
Full-galloping; nor bridle drew
Until he reached the mound.

III

Then off there flung in smiling joy,
And held himself erect
By just his horse's mane, a boy:
You hardly could suspect —

(So tight he kept his lips compressed,
Scarce any blood came through)
You looked twice ere you saw his breast
Was all but shot in two.

IV

"Well," cried he, "Emperor, by God's grace
We've got you Ratisbon!
The Marshal 's in the market-place,
And you 'll be there anon
To see your flag-bird flap his vans
Where I, to heart's desire,
Perched him!" The chief's eye flashed; his plans
Soared up again like fire.

V

The chief's eye flashed; but presently
Softened itself, as sheathes
A film the mother-eagle's eye
When her bruised eaglet breathes;
"You 're wounded!" "Nay," the soldier's pride
Touched to the quick, he said:
"I 'm killed, Sire!" And his chief beside
Smiling the boy fell dead.

THE PATRIOT

AN OLD STORY

1855

I

It was roses, roses, all the way,
With myrtle mixed in my path like mad:
The house-roofs seemed to heave and sway,
The church-spires flamed, such flags they had,
A year ago on this very day.

II

The air broke into a mist with bells,
The old walls rocked with the crowd and cries.
Had I said, "Good folk, mere noise repels —
But give me your sun from yonder skies!"
They had answered, "And afterward, what else?"

III

Alack, it was I who leaped at the sun
To give it my loving friends to keep!
Naught man could do, have I left undone:
And you see my harvest, what I reap
This very day, now a year is run.

IV

There 's nobody on the house-tops now —
Just a palsied few at the windows set;
For the best of the sight is, all allow,
At the Shambles' Gate — or, better yet,
By the very scaffold's foot, I trow.

V

I go in the rain, and, more than needs,
A rope cuts both my wrists behind;
And I think, by the feel, my forehead bleeds,
For they fling, whoever has a mind,
Stones at me for my year's misdeeds.

VI

Thus I entered, and thus I go!
In triumphs, people have dropped down dead.
"Paid by the world, what dost thou owe
Me?" — God might question; now instead,
'T is God shall repay: I am safer so.

MY LAST DUCHESS

FERRARA

1842

That 's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will 't please you sit and look at her? I said
"Frà Pandolf" by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 't was not

Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Frà Pandolf chanced to say "Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat:" such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart — how shall I say? — too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 't was all one! My favor at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace — all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men, — good! but thanked
Somehow — I know not how — as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who 'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech — (which I have not) — to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark" — and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
— E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave command;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands

As if alive. Will 't please you rise? We 'll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we 'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

COUNT GISMOND

AIX IN PROVENCE

1842

CHRIST God who savest man, save most
Of men Count Gismond who saved me!
Count Gauthier, when he chose his post,
Chose time and place and company
To suit it; when he struck at length
My honor, 't was with all his strength.

II

And doubtlessly ere he could draw
All points to one, he must have schemed!
That miserable morning saw
Few half so happy as I seemed,
While being dressed in queen's array
To give our tourney prize away.

III

I thought they loved me, did me grace
To please themselves; 't was all their deed;
God makes, or fair or foul, our face;
If showing mine so caused to bleed
My cousins' hearts, they should have dropped
A word, and straight the play had stopped.

IV

They, too, so beauteous! Each a queen
By virtue of her brow and breast;
Not needing to be crowned, I mean,
As I do. E'en when I was dressed,
Had either of them spoke, instead
Of glancing sidewise with still head!

But no: they let me laugh, and sing
My birthday song quite through, adjust
The last rose in my garland, fling
A last look on the mirror, trust
My arms to each an arm of theirs,
And so descend the castle-stairs —

VI

And come out on the morning-troop
Of merry friends who kissed my cheek,
And called me queen, and made me stoop
Under the canopy — (a streak
That pierced it, of the outside sun,
Powdered with gold its gloom's soft dun) -

VII

And they could let me take my state
And foolish throne amid applause
Of all come there to celebrate
My queen's-day — Oh I think the cause
Of much was, they forget no crowd
Makes up for parents in their shroud!

VIII

However that be, all eyes were bent
Upon me, when my cousins cast
Theirs down; 't was time I should present
The victor's crown, but . . . there, 't will last
No long time . . . the old mist again
Blinds me as then it did. How vain!

IX

See! Gismond 's at the gate, in talk
With his two boys: I can proceed.
Well, at that moment, who should stalk
Forth boldly — to my face, indeed —
But Gauthier, and he thundered "Stay!"
And all stayed. "Bring no crowns, I say!

X

"Bring torches! Wind the penance-sheet
About her! Let her shun the chaste,
Or lay herself before their feet!
Shall she whose body I embraced
A night long, queen it in the day?
For honor's sake no crowns, I say!"

XI

I? What I answered? As I live,
I never fancied such a thing
As answer possible to give.
What says the body when they spring
Some monstrous torture-engine's whole
Strength on it? No more says the soul.

XII

Till out strode Gismond; then I knew
That I was saved. I never met
His face before, but, at first view,
I felt quite sure that God had set
Himself to Satan; who would spend
A minute's mistrust on the end?

XIII

He strode to Gauthier, in his throat
Gave him the lie, then struck his mouth
With one back-handed blow that wrote
In blood men's verdict there. North, South,
East, West, I looked. The lie was dead,
And damned, and truth stood up instead.

XIV

This glads me most, that I enjoyed
The heart of the joy, with my content
In watching Gismond unalloyed
By any doubt of the event:
God took that on him — I was bid
Watch Gismond for my part: I did.

XV

Did I not watch him while he let
His armorer just brace his greaves,
Rivet his hauberk, on the fret
The while! His foot . . . my memory leaves
No least stamp out, nor how anon
He pulled his ringing gauntlets on.

XVI

And e'en before the trumpet's sound
Was finished, prone lay the false knight,
Prone as his lie, upon the ground:
Gismond flew at him, used no sleight
O' the sword, but open-breasted drove,
Cleaving till out the truth he clove.

XVII

Which done, he dragged him to my feet
And said "Here die, but end thy breath
In full confession, lest thou fleet
From my first, to God's second death!
Say, hast thou lied?" And, "I have lied
To God and her," he said, and died.

XVIII

Then Gismond, kneeling to me, asked
— What safe my heart holds, though no word
Could I repeat now, if I tasked
My powers forever, to a third
Dear even as you are. Pass the rest
Until I sank upon his breast.

XIX

Over my head his arm he flung
 Against the world; and scarce I felt
His sword (that dripped by me and swung)
 A little shifted in its belt:
For he began to say the while
How South our home lay many a mile.

XX

So 'mid the shouting multitude
 We two walked forth to never more
Return. My cousins have pursued
 Their life, untroubled as before
I vexed them. Gauthier's dwelling-place
God lighten! May his soul find grace!

XXI

Our elder boy has got the clear
 Great brow; tho' when his brother's black
Full eye shows scorn, it . . . Gismond here?
 And have you brought my tercel back?
I just was telling Adela
How many birds it struck since May.

THE BOY AND THE ANGEL

1845

Morning, evening, noon and night,
"Praise God!" sang Theocrite.

Then to his poor trade he turned,
Whereby the daily meal was earned.

Hard he labored, long and well;
O'er his work the boy's curls fell.

But ever, at each period,
He stopped and sang, "Praise God!"

Then back again his curls he threw,
And cheerful turned to work anew.

Said Blaise, the listening monk, "Well done;
I doubt not thou art heard, my son:

"As well as if thy voice to-day
Were praising God, the Pope's great way.

"This Easter Day, the Pope at Rome
Praises God from Peter's dome."

Said Theocrite, "Would God that I
Might praise him, that great way, and die!"

Night passed, day shone,
And Theocrite was gone.

With God a day endures alway,
A thousand years are but a day.

God said in heaven, "Nor day nor night
Now brings the voice of my delight."

Then Gabriel, like a rainbow's birth,
Spread his wings and sank to earth;

Entered, in flesh, the empty cell,
Lived there, and played the craftsman well;

And morning, evening, noon and night,
Praised God in place of Theocrite.

And from a boy, to youth he grew:
The man put off the stripling's hue:

. . .

The man matured and fell away
Into the season of decay:

And ever o'er the trade he bent,
And ever lived on earth content.

(He did God's will; to him, all one
If on the earth or in the sun.)

God said, "A praise is in mine ear;
There is no doubt in it, no fear:

"So sing old worlds, and so
New worlds that from my footstool go.

"Clearer loves sound other ways:
I miss my little human praise."

Then forth sprang Gabriel's wings, off fell
The flesh disguise, remained the cell.

'T was Easter Day: he flew to Rome,
And paused above Saint Peter's dome.

In the tiring-room close by
The great outer gallery,

With his holy vestments dight,
Stood the new Pope, Theocrite:

And all his past career
Came back upon him clear,

Since when, a boy, he plied his trade,
Till on his life the sickness weighed;

And in his cell, when death drew near,
An angel in a dream brought cheer:

And rising from the sickness drear
He grew a priest, and now stood here.

To the East with praise he turned,
And on his sight the angel burned.

"I bore thee from thy craftsman's cell
And set thee here; I did not well.

"Vainly I left my angel-sphere,
Vain was thy dream of many a year.

"Thy voice's praise seemed weak; it dropped —
Creation's chorus stopped!

"Go back and praise again
The early way, while I remain.

"With that weak voice of our disdain,
Take up creation's pausing strain.

"Back to the cell and poor employ:
Resume the craftsman and the boy!"

Theocrite grew old at home;
A new Pope dwelt in Peter's dome.

One vanished as the other died:
They sought God side by side.

INSTANS TYRANNUS

1855

I

Of the million or two, more or less,
I rule and possess,
One man, for some cause undefined,
Was least to my mind.

II

I struck him, he grovelled of course —
For, what was his force?
I pinned him to earth with my weight
And persistence of hate:
And he lay, would not moan, would not curse,
As his lot might be worse.

III

"Were the object less mean, would he stand
At the swing of my hand!
For obscurity helps him and blots
The hole where he squats."
So, I set my five wits on the stretch
To inveigle the wretch.
All in vain! Gold and jewels I threw.
Still he couched there perdue;
I tempted his blood and his flesh,
Hid in roses my mesh,
Choicest cates and the flagon's best spilth:
Still he kept to his filth.

IV

Had he kith now or kin, were access
To his heart, did I press:
Just a son or a mother to seize!
No such booty as these.
Were it simply a friend to pursue
'Mid my million or two,
Who could pay me in person or pelf
What he owes me himself!
No: I could not but smile through my chafe:
For the fellow lay safe
As his mates do, the midge and the nit,
— Through minuteness, to wit.

V

Then a humor more great took its place
At the thought of his face,
The droop, the low cares of the mouth,
The trouble uncouth
'Twixt the brows, all that air one is fain
To put out of its pain.
And, "no!" I admonished myself,
"Is one mocked by an elf,
Is one baffled by toad or by rat?
The gravamen 's in that!
How the lion, who crouches to suit
His back to my foot,
Would admire that I stand in debate!
But the small turns the great
If it vexes you, — that is the thing!
Toad or rat vex the king?
Though I waste half my realm to unearth
Toad or rat, 't is well worth!"

VI

So, I soberly laid my last plan
To extinguish the man.
Round his creep-hole, with never a break
Ran my fires for his sake;
Over-head, did my thunder combine
With my underground mine:
Till I looked from my labor content
To enjoy the event.

VII

When sudden . . . how think ye, the end?
Did I say "without friend"?
Say rather, from marge to blue marge
The whole sky grew his targe
With the sun's self for visible boss,
While an Arm ran across
Which the earth heaved beneath like a breast
Where the wretch was safe prest!
Do you see? Just my vengeance complete,
The man sprang to his feet,
Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and prayed!
— So, *I* was afraid!

MESMERISM

1855

I

All I believed is true!
I am able yet
All I want, to get
By a method as strange as new:
Dare I trust the same to you?

II

If at night, when doors are shut,
And the wood-worm picks,
And the death-watch ticks,
And the bar has a flag of smut,
And a cat 's in the water-butt —

III

And the socket floats and flares,
And the house-beams groan,
And a foot unknown
Is surmised on the garret-stairs,
And the locks slip unawares —

IV

And the spider, to serve his ends,
By a sudden thread,
Arms and legs outspread,
On the table's midst descends,
Comes to find, God knows what friends! —

V

If since eve drew in, I say,
I have sat and brought
(So to speak) my thought
To bear on the woman away,
Till I felt my hair turn gray —

VI

Till I seemed to have and hold,
In the vacancy
'Twixt the wall and me,
From the hair-plait's chestnut gold
To the foot in its muslin fold —

VII

Have and hold, then and there,
Her, from head to foot,
Breathing and mute,
Passive and yet aware,
In the grasp of my steady stare —

VIII

Hold and have, there and then,
All her body and soul
That completes my whole,
All that women add to men,
In the clutch of my steady ken —

IX

Having and holding, till
I imprint her fast
On the void at last
As the sun does whom he will
By the calotypist's skill —

X

Then, — if my heart's strength serve,
And through all and each
Of the veils I reach
To her soul and never swerve,
Knitting an iron nerve —

XI

Command her soul to advance
And inform the shape
Which has made escape
And before my countenance
Answers me glance for glance —

XII

I, still with a gesture fit
Of my hands that best
Do my soul's behest,
Pointing the power from it,
While myself do steadfast sit —

XIII

Steadfast and still the same
On my object bent,
While the hands give vent
To my ardor and my aim
And break into very flame —

XIV

Then I reach, I must believe,
Not her soul in vain,
For to me again
It reaches, and past retrieve
Is wound in the toils I weave;

XV

And must follow as I require,
As befits a thrall,
Bringing flesh and all,
Essence and earth-attire,
To the source of the tractile fire:

XVI

Till the house called hers, not mine,
With a growing weight
Seems to suffocate
If she break not its leaden line
And escape from its close confine.

XVII

Out of doors into the night!
On to the maze
Of the wild wood-ways,
Not turning to left nor right
From the pathway, blind with sight —

XVIII

Making thro' rain and wind
O'er the broken shrubs,
'Twixt the stems and stubs,
With a still, composed, strong mind,
Nor a care for the world behind —

XIX

Swifter and still more swift,
As the crowding peace
Doth to joy increase
In the wide blind eyes uplift
Thro' the darkness and the drift!

XX

While I — to the shape, I too
Feel my soul dilate
Nor a whit abate,
And relax not a gesture due,
As I see my belief come true.

XXI

For, there! have I drawn or no
Life to that lip?
Do my fingers dip
In a flame which again they throw
On the cheek that breaks a-glow?

XXII

Ha! was the hair so first?
What, unfilleted,
Made alive, and spread
Through the void with a rich outburst,
Chestnut gold-interspersed?

XXIII

Like the doors of a casket-shrine,
See, on either side,
Her two arms divide
Till the heart betwixt makes sign,
Take me, for I am thine!

XXIV

"Now — now" — the door is heard!
Hark, the stairs! and near —
Nearer — and here —
"Now!" and at call the third
She enters without a word.

XXV

On doth she march and on
To the fancied shape;
It is, past escape,
Herself, now: the dream is done
And the shadow and she are one.

XXVI

First I will pray. Do Thou
That ownest the soul,
Yet wilt grant control
To another, nor disallow
For a time, restrain me now!

XXVII

I admonish me while I may,
Not to squander guilt,
Since require Thou wilt
At my hand its price one day!
What the price is, who can say?

THE GLOVE

1845

(PETER RONSARD *loquitur*.)

"HEIGHO!" yawned one day King Francis,
"Distance all value enhances!
When a man 's busy, why, leisure
Strikes him as wonderful pleasure:
'Faith, and at leisure once is he?
Straightway he wants to be busy.
Here we 've got peace; and aghast I 'm
Caught thinking war the true pastime.
Is there a reason in metre?
Give us your speech, master Peter!"
I who, if mortal dare say so,
Ne'er am at loss with my Naso,
"Sire," I replied, "joys prove cloudlets:
Men are the merest Ixions" —
Here the King whistled aloud, "Let 's
— Heigho — go look at our lions!"
Such are the sorrowful chances
If you talk fine to King Francis.

And so, to the courtyard proceeding,
Our company, Francis was leading,

Increased by new followers tenfold
Before he arrived at the penfold;
Lords, ladies, like clouds which bedizen
At sunset the western horizon.
And Sir De Lorge pressed 'mid the foremost
With the dame he professed to adore most.
Oh, what a face! One by fits eyed
Her, and the horrible pitside;
For the penfold surrounded a hollow
Which led where the eye scarce dared follow,
And shelved to the chamber secluded
Where Bluebeard, the great lion, brooded.
The King hailed his keeper, an Arab
As glossy and black as a scarab,
And bade him make sport and at once stir
Up and out of his den the old monster.
They opened a hole in the wire-work
Across it, and dropped there a firework,
And fled: one's heart's beating redoubled;
A pause, while the pit's mouth was troubled,
The blackness and silence so utter,
By the firework's slow sparkling and sputter;
Then earth in a sudden contortion
Gave out to our gaze her abortion.
Such a brute! Were I friend Clement Marot
(Whose experience of nature 's but narrow,
And whose faculties move in no small mist
When he versifies David the Psalmist)
I should study that brute to describe you
Illum Juda Leonem de Tribu.
One's whole blood grew curdling and creepy
To see the black mane, vast and heapy,
The tail in the air stiff and straining,
The wide eyes, nor waxing nor waning,
As over the barrier which bounded

His platform, and us who surrounded
The barrier, they reached and they rested
On space that might stand him in best stead:
For who knew, he thought, what the amazement,
The eruption of clatter and blaze meant,
And if, in this minute of wonder,
No outlet, 'mid lightning and thunder,
Lay broad, and, his shackles all shivered,
The lion at last was delivered?
Ay, that was the open sky o'erhead!
And you saw by the flash on his forehead,
By the hope in those eyes wide and steady,
He was leagues in the desert already,
Driving the flocks up the mountain,
Or catlike couched hard by the fountain
To waylay the date-gathering negress:
So guarded he entrance or egress.
"How he stands!" quoth the King: "we may well swear,
(No novice, we 've won our spurs elsewhere
And so can afford the confession,)
We exercise wholesome discretion
In keeping aloof from his threshold;
Once hold you, those jaws want no fresh hold,
Their first would too pleasantly purloin
The visitor's brisket or surloin:
But who 's he would prove so fool-hardy?
Not the best man of Marignan, pardie!"

The sentence no sooner was uttered,
Than over the rails a glove fluttered,
Fell close to the lion, and rested:
The dame 't was, who flung it and jested
With life so, De Lorge had been wooing
For months past; he sat there pursuing

His suit, weighing out with nonchalance
Fine speeches like gold from a balance.

Sound the trumpet, no true knight 's a tarrier!
De Lorge made one leap at the barrier,
Walked straight to the glove, — while the lion
Ne'er moved, kept his far-reaching eye on
The palm-tree-edged desert-spring's sapphire,
And the musky oiled skin of the Kaffir, —
Picked it up, and as calmly retreated,
Leaped back where the lady was seated,
And full in the face of its owner
Flung the glove.

"Your heart's queen, you dethrone her?
So should I!" — cried the King — "'t was mere vanity,
Not love, set that task to humanity!"
Lords and ladies alike turned with loathing
From such a proved wolf in sheep's clothing.

Not so, I; for I caught an expression
In her brow's undisturbed self-possession
Amid the Court's scoffing and merriment, —
As if from no pleasing experiment
She rose, yet of pain not much heedful
So long as the process was needful, —
As if she had tried in a crucible,
To what "speeches like gold" were reducible,
And, finding the finest prove copper,
Felt the smoke in her face was but proper;
To know what she had *not* to trust to,
Was worth all the ashes and dust too.
She went out 'mid hooting and laughter;
Clement Marot stayed; I followed after,

And asked, as a grace, what it all meant?
If she wished not the rash deed's recallment?
"For I" — so I spoke — "am a poet:
Human nature, — behoves that I know it!"

She told me, "Too long had I heard
Of the deed proved alone by the word:
For my love — what De Lorge would not dare!
With my scorn — what De Lorge could compare!
And the endless descriptions of death
He would brave when my lip formed a breath,
I must reckon as braved, or, of course,
Doubt his word — and moreover, perforce,
For such gifts as no lady could spurn,
Must offer my love in return.
When I looked on your lion, it brought
All the dangers at once to my thought,
Encountered by all sorts of men,
Before he was lodged in his den, —
From the poor slave whose club or bare hands
Dug the trap, set the snare on the sands,
With no King and no Court to applaud,
By no shame, should he shrink, overawed,
Yet to capture the creature made shift,
That his rude boys might laugh at the gift,
— To the page who last leaped o'er the fence
Of the pit, on no greater pretence
Than to get back the bonnet he dropped,
Lest his pay for a week should be stopped.
So, wiser I judged it to make
One trial what 'death for my sake'
Really meant, while the power was yet mine,
Than to wait until time should define
Such a phrase not so simply as I,
Who took it to mean just 'to die.'

The blow a glove gives is but weak:
Does the mark yet discolor my cheek?
But when the heart suffers a blow,
Will the pain pass so soon, do you know?"

I looked, as away she was sweeping,
And saw a youth eagerly keeping
As close as he dared to the doorway.
No doubt that a noble should more weigh
His life than befits a plebeian;
And yet, had our brute been Nemean —
(I judge by a certain calm fervor
The youth stepped with, forward to serve her)
— He 'd have scarce thought you did him the worst turn
If you whispered "Friend, what you 'd get, first earn!"
And when, shortly after, she carried
Her shame from the Court, and they married,
To that marriage some happiness, maugre
The voice of the Court, I dared augur.

For De Lorge, he made women with men vie,
Those in wonder and praise, these in envy;
And in short stood so plain a head taller
That he wooed and won . . . how do you call her?
The beauty, that rose in the sequel
To the King's love, who loved her a week well.
And 't was noticed he never would honor
De Lorge (who looked daggers upon her)
With the easy commission of stretching
His legs in the service, and fetching
His wife, from her chamber, those straying
Sad gloves she was always mislaying,

While the King took the closet to chat in, —
But of course this adventure came pat in.
And never the King told the story,
How bringing a glove brought such glory,
But the wife smiled — "His nerves are grown firmer:
Mine he brings now and utters no murmur."

Venienti occurrite morbo!
With which moral I drop my theorbo.

TIME'S REVENGES

1845

I 'VE a Friend, over the sea;
I like him, but he loves me.
It all grew out of the books I write;
They find such favor in his sight
That he slaughters you with savage looks
Because you don't admire my books.
He does himself though, — and if some vein
Were to snap to-night in this heavy brain,
To-morrow month, if I lived to try,
Round should I just turn quietly,
Or out of the bedclothes stretch my hand
Till I found him, come from his foreign land
To be my nurse in this poor place,
And make my broth and wash my face
And light my fire and, all the while,
Bear with his old good-humored smile
That I told him "Better have kept away
Than come and kill me, night and day,
With, worse than fever throbs and shoots,
The creaking of his clumsy boots."

I am as sure that this he would do,
As that Saint Paul's is striking two.
And I think I rather . . . woe is me!
— Yes, rather would see him than not see,
If lifting a hand could seat him there
Before me in the empty chair
To-night, when my head aches indeed,
And I can neither think nor read
Nor make these purple fingers hold
The pen; this garret 's freezing cold!

And I 've a Lady — there he wakes,
The laughing fiend and prince of snakes
Within me, at her name, to pray
Fate send some creature in the way
Of my love for her, to be down-torn,
Upthrust and outward-borne,
So I might prove myself that sea
Of passion which I needs must be!
Call my thoughts false and my fancies quaint
And my style infirm and its figures faint,
All the critics say, and more blame yet,
And not one angry word you get.
But, please you, wonder I would put
My cheek beneath that lady's foot
Rather than trample under mine
The laurels of the Florentine,
And you shall see how the devil spends
A fire God gave for other ends!
I tell you, I stride up and down
This garret, crowned with love's best crown,
And feasted with love's perfect feast,
To think I kill for her, at least,
Body and soul and peace and fame,
Alike youth's end and manhood's aim,

— So is my spirit, as flesh with sin,
Filled full, eaten out and in
With the face of her, the eyes of her,
The lips, the little chin, the stir
Of shadow round her mouth; and she
— I 'll tell you, — calmly would decree
That I should roast at a slow fire,
If that would compass her desire
And make her one whom they invite
To the famous ball to-morrow night.

There may be heaven; there must be hell;
Meantime, there is our earth here — well!

THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND

1845

That second time they hunted me
From hill to plain, from shore to sea,
And Austria, hounding far and wide
Her blood-hounds thro' the country-side,
Breathed hot and instant on my trace, —
I made six days a hiding-place
Of that dry green old aqueduct
Where I and Charles, when boys, have plucked
The fire-flies from the roof above,
Bright creeping thro' the moss they love:
— How long it seems since Charles was lost!
Six days the soldiers crossed and crossed
The country in my very sight;
And when that peril ceased at night,
The sky broke out in red dismay
With signal fires; well, there I lay

Close covered o'er in my recess,
Up to the neck in ferns and cress,
Thinking on Metternich our friend,
And Charles's miserable end,
And much beside, two days; the third,
Hunger o'ercame me when I heard
The peasants from the village go
To work among the maize; you know,
With us in Lombardy, they bring
Provisions packed on mules, a string
With little bells that cheer their task,
And casks, and boughs on every cask
To keep the sun's heat from the wine;
These I let pass in jingling line,
And, close on them, dear noisy crew,
The peasants from the village, too;
For at the very rear would troop
Their wives and sisters in a group
To help, I knew. When these had passed,
I threw my glove to strike the last,
Taking the chance: she did not start,
Much less cry out, but stooped apart,
One instant rapidly glanced round,
And saw me beckon from the ground.
A wild bush grows and hides my crypt;
She picked my glove up while she stripped
A branch off, then rejoined the rest
With that; my glove lay in her breast.
Then I drew breath; they disappeared:
It was for Italy I feared.

An hour, and she returned alone
Exactly where my glove was thrown.
Meanwhile came many thoughts: on me
Rested the hopes of Italy.

I had devised a certain tale
Which, when 't was told her, could not fail
Persuade a peasant of its truth;
I meant to call a freak of youth
This hiding, and give hopes of pay,
And no temptation to betray.
But when I saw that woman's face,
Its calm simplicity of grace,
Our Italy's own attitude
In which she walked thus far, and stood,
Planting each naked foot so firm,
To crush the snake and spare the worm —
At first sight of her eyes, I said,
"I am that man upon whose head
They fix the price, because I hate
The Austrians over us: the State
Will give you gold — oh, gold so much! —
If you betray me to their clutch,
And be your death, for aught I know,
If once they find you saved their foe.
Now, you must bring me food and drink,
And also paper, pen and ink,
And carry safe what I shall write
To Padua, which you 'll reach at night
Before the duomo shuts; go in,
And wait till Tenebræ begin;
Walk to the third confessional,
Between the pillar and the wall,
And kneeling whisper, *Whence comes peace?*
Say it a second time, then cease;
And if the voice inside returns,
From Christ and Freedom; what concerns
The cause of Peace? — for answer, slip
My letter where you placed your lip;
Then come back happy we have done

Our mother service — I, the son,
As you the daughter of our land!"

Three mornings more, she took her stand
In the same place, with the same eyes:
I was no surer of sun-rise
Than of her coming. We conferred
Of her own prospects, and I heard
She had a lover — stout and tall,
She said — then let her eyelids fall,
"He could do much" — as if some doubt
Entered her heart, — then, passing out,
"She could not speak for others, who
Had other thoughts; herself she knew."
And so she brought me drink and food.
After four days, the scouts pursued
Another path; at last arrived
The help my Paduan friends contrived
To furnish me: she brought the news.
For the first time I could not choose
But kiss her hand, and lay my own
Upon her head — "This faith was shown
To Italy, our mother; she
Uses my hand and blesses thee."
She followed down to the sea-shore;
I left and never saw her more.

How very long since I have thought
Concerning — much less wished for — aught
Beside the good of Italy,
For which I live and mean to die!
I never was in love; and since
Charles proved false, what shall now convince
My inmost heart I have a friend?
However, if I pleased to spend

Real wishes on myself — say, three —
I know at least what one should be.
I would grasp Metternich until
I felt his red wet throat distil
In blood thro' these two hands. And next,
— Nor much for that am I perplexed —
Charles, perjured traitor, for his part,
Should die slow of a broken heart
Under his new employers. Last
— Ah, there, what should I wish? For fast
Do I grow old and out of strength.
If I resolved to seek at length
My father's house again, how scared
They all would look, and unprepared!
My brothers live in Austria's pay
— Disowned me long ago, men say;
And all my early mates who used
To praise me so — perhaps induced
More than one early step of mine —
Are turning wise: while some opine
"Freedom grows license," some suspect
"Haste breeds delay," and recollect
They always said, such premature
Beginnings never could endure!
So, with a sullen "All 's for best,"
The land seems settling to its rest.
I think then, I should wish to stand
This evening in that dear, lost land,
Over the sea the thousand miles,
And know if yet that woman smiles
With the calm smile; some little farm
She lives in there, no doubt: what harm
If I sat on the door-side bench,
And, while her spindle made a trench
Fantastically in the dust,

Inquired of all her fortunes — just
Her children's ages and their names,
And what may be the husband's aims
For each of them. I 'd talk this out,
And sit there, for an hour about,
Then kiss her hand once more, and lay
Mine on her head, and go my way.

So much for idle wishing — how
It steals the time! To business now.

THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY

PIANO DI SORRENTO

1845

FORTÙ, Fortù, my beloved one,
Sit here by my side,
On my knees put up both little feet!
I was sure, if I tried,
I could make you laugh spite of Scirocco.
Now, open your eyes,
Let me keep you amused till he vanish
In black from the skies,
With telling my memories over
As you tell your beads;
All the Plain saw me gather, I garland
— The flowers or the weeds.

Time for rain! for your long hot dry Autumn
Had net-worked with brown
The white skin of each grape on the bunches,
Marked like a quail's crown,

Those creatures you make such account of,
Whose heads, — speckled white
Over brown like a great spider's back,
As I told you last night, —
Your mother bites off for her supper.
Red-ripe as could be.
Pomegranates were chapping and splitting
In halves on the tree:
And betwixt the loose walls of great flint-stone,
Or in the thick dust
On the path, or straight out of the rock-side,
Wherever could thrust
Some burnt sprig of bold hardy rock-flower
Its yellow face up,
For the prize were great butterflies fighting,
Some five for one cup.
So, I guessed, ere I got up this morning,
What change was in store,
By the quick rustle-down of the quail-nets
Which woke me before
I could open my shutter, made fast
With a bough and a stone,
And looked thro' the twisted dead vine-twigs,
Sole lattice that 's known.
Quick and sharp rang the rings down the net-poles,
While, busy beneath,
Your priest and his brother tugged at them,
The rain in their teeth.
And out upon all the flat house-roofs
Where split figs lay drying,
The girls took the frails under cover:
Nor use seemed in trying
To get out the boats and go fishing,
For, under the cliff,
Fierce the black water frothed o'er the blind-rock.

No seeing our skiff
Arrive about noon from Amalfi,
— Our fisher arrive,
And pitch down his basket before us,
All trembling alive
With pink and gray jellies, your sea-fruit;
You touch the strange lumps,
And mouths gape there, eyes open, all manner
Of horns and of humps,
Which only the fisher looks grave at,
While round him like imps
Cling screaming the children as naked
And brown as his shrimps;
Himself too as bare to the middle
— You see round his neck
The string and its brass coin suspended,
That saves him from wreck.
But to-day not a boat reached Salerno,
So back, to a man,
Came our friends, with whose help in the vineyards
Grape-harvest began
In the vat, halfway up in our house-side,
Like blood the juice spins,
While your brother all bare-legged is dancing
Till breathless he grins
Dead-beaten in effort on effort
To keep the grapes under,
Since still when he seems all but master,
In pours the fresh plunder
From girls who keep coming and going
With basket on shoulder,
And eyes shut against the rain's driving;
Your girls that are older, —
For under the hedges of aloe,
And where, on its bed

Of the orchard's black mould, the love-apple
Lies pulpy and red,
All the young ones are kneeling and filling
Their laps with the snails
Tempted out by this first rainy weather, —
Your best of regales,
As to-night will be proved to my sorrow,
When, supping in state,
We shall feast out grape-gleaners (two dozen,
Three over one plate)
With lasagne so tempting to swallow
In slippery ropes,
And gourds fried in great purple slices,
That color of popes.
Meantime, see the grape bunch they 've brought you:
The rain-water slips
O'er the heavy blue bloom on each globe
Which the wasp to your lips
Still follows with fretful persistence:
Nay, taste, while awake,
This half of a curd-white smooth cheese-ball
That peels, flake by flake,
Like an onion, each smoother and whiter;
Next, sip this weak wine
From the thin green glass flask, with its stopper,
A leaf of the vine;
And end with the prickly-pear's red flesh
That leaves thro' its juice
The stony black seeds on your pearl-teeth.
Scirocco is loose!
Hark, the quick, whistling pelt of the olives
Which, thick in one's track,
Tempt the stranger to pick up and bite them,
Tho' not yet half black!
How the old twisted olive trunks shudder,

The medlars let fall
Their hard fruit, and the brittle great fig-trees
Snap off, figs and all,
For here comes the whole of the tempest!
No refuge, but creep
Back again to my side and my shoulder,
And listen or sleep.
O how will your country show next week,
When all the vine-boughs
Have been stripped of their foliage to pasture
The mules and the cows?
Last eve, I rode over the mountains:
Your brother, my guide,
Soon left me, to feast on the myrtles
That offered, each side,
Their fruit-balls, black, glossy and luscious, —
Or strip from the sorbs
A treasure, or, rosy and wondrous,
Those hairy gold orbs!
But my mule picked his sure sober path out,
Just stopping to neigh
When he recognized down in the valley
His mates on their way
With the faggots and barrels of water;
And soon we emerged
From the plain, where the woods could scarce follow;
And still as we urged
Our way, the woods wondered, and left us,
As up still we trudged
Though the wild path grew wilder each instant,
And place was e'en grudged
'Mid the rock-chasms and piles of loose stones
Like the loose broken teeth
Of some monster which climbed there to die
From the ocean beneath —

Place was grudged to the silver-gray fume-weed
That clung to the path,
And dark rosemary ever a-dying
That, 'spite the wind's wrath,
So loves the salt rock's face to seaward,
And lentisks as stanch
To the stone where they root and bear berries,
And . . . what shows a branch
Coral-colored, transparent, with circlets
Of pale seagreen leaves;
Over all trod my mule with the caution
Of gleaners o'er sheaves,
Still, foot after foot like a lady,
Till, round after round,
He climbed to the top of Calvano,
And God's own profound
Was above me, and round me the mountains,
And under, the sea,
And within me my heart to bear witness
What was and shall be.
Oh, heaven and the terrible crystal!
No rampart excludes
Your eye from the life to be lived
In the blue solitudes.
Oh, those mountains, their infinite movement!
Still moving with you;
For, ever some new head and breast of them
Thrusts into view
To observe the intruder; you see it
If quickly you turn
And, before they escape you surprise them.
They grudge you should learn
How the soft plains they look on, lean over
And love (they pretend)
— Cower beneath them, the flat sea-pine crouches,

The wild fruit-trees bend,
E'en the myrtle-leaves curl, shrink and shut:
All is silent and grave:
'T is a sensual and timorous beauty,
How fair! but a slave.
So, I turned to the sea; and there slumbered
As greenly as ever
Those isles of the siren, your Galli;
No ages can sever
The Three, nor enable their sister
To join them, — halfway
On the voyage, she looked at Ulysses —
No farther to-day,
Tho' the small one, just launched in the wave,
Watches breast-high and steady
From under the rock, her bold sister
Swum halfway already.
Fortù, shall we sail there together
And see from the sides
Quite new rocks show their faces, new haunts
Where the siren abides?
Shall we sail round and round them, close over
The rocks, tho' unseen,
That ruffle the gray glassy water
To glorious green?
Then scramble from splinter to splinter,
Reach land and explore,
On the largest, the strange square black turret
With never a door,
Just a loop to admit the quick lizards;
Then, stand there and hear
The birds' quiet singing, that tells us
What life is, so clear?
— The secret they sang to Ulysses
When, ages ago,

He heard and he knew this life's secret
I hear and I know.

Ah, see! The sun breaks o'er Calvano;
He strikes the great gloom
And flutters it o'er the mount's summit
In airy gold fume.
All is over. Look out, see the gipsy,
Our tinker and smith,
Has arrived, set up bellows and forge,
And down-squatted forthwith
To his hammering, under the wall there;
One eye keeps aloof
The urchins that itch to be putting
His jews'-harps to proof,
While the other, thro' locks of curled wire,
Is watching how sleek
Shines the hog, come to share in the windfall
— Chew, abbot's own cheek!
All is over. Wake up and come out now,
And down let us go,
And see the fine things got in order
At church for the show
Of the Sacrament, set forth this evening.
To-morrow 's the Feast
Of the Rosary's Virgin, by no means
Of Virgins the least,
As you 'll hear in the off-hand discourse
Which (all nature, no art)
The Dominican brother, these three weeks,
Was getting by heart.
Not a pillar nor post but is dizened
With red and blue papers;
All the roof waves with ribbons, each altar
A-blaze with long tapers;

But the great masterpiece is the scaffold
Rigged glorious to hold
All the fiddlers and fifers and drummers
And trumpeters bold,
Not afraid of Bellini nor Auber,
Who, when the priest 's hoarse,
Will strike us up something that 's brisk
For the feast's second course.
And then will the flaxen-wigged Image
Be carried in pomp
Thro' the plain, while in gallant procession
The priests mean to stomp.
All round the glad church lie old bottles
With gunpowder stopped,
Which will be, when the Image re-enters,
Religiously popped;
And at night from the crest of Calvano
Great bonfires will hang,
On the plain will the trumpets join chorus,
And more poppers bang.
At all events, come — to the garden
As far as the wall;
See me tap with a hoe on the plaster
Till out there shall fall
A scorpion with wide angry nippers!

— "Such trifles!" you say?
Fortù, in my England at home,
Men meet gravely to-day
And debate, if abolishing Corn-laws
Be righteous and wise
— If 't were proper, Scirocco should vanish
In black from the skies!

IN A GONDOLA

1842

He sings.

I SEND my heart up to thee, all my heart
In this my singing.
For the stars help me, and the sea bears part;
The very night is clinging
Closer to Venice' streets to leave one space
Above me, whence thy face
May light my joyous heart to thee its dwelling-place.

She speaks.

Say after me, and try to say
My very words, as if each word
Came from you of your own accord,
In your own voice, in your own way:
"This woman's heart and soul and brain
Are mine as much as this gold chain
She bids me wear; which" (say again)
"I choose to make by cherishing
A precious thing, or choose to fling
Over the boat-side, ring by ring."
And yet once more say . . . no word more!
Since words are only words. Give o'er!

Unless you call me, all the same,
Familiarly by my pet name,
Which if the Three should hear you call,
And me reply to, would proclaim
At once our secret to them all.
Ask of me, too, command me, blame —

Do, break down the partition-wall
'Twixt us, the daylight world beholds
Curtained in dusk and splendid folds!
What 's left but — all of me to take?
I am the Three's: prevent them, slake
Your thirst! 'T is said, the Arab sage,
In practising with gems, can loose
Their subtle spirit in his cruce
And leave but ashes: so, sweet mage,
Leave them my ashes when thy use
Sucks out my soul, thy heritage!

He sings.

I

Past we glide, and past, and past!
What 's that poor Agnese doing
Where they make the shutters fast?
Gray Zanobi 's just a-wooing
To his couch the purchased bride:
Past we glide!

II

Past we glide, and past, and past!
Why 's the Pucci Palace flaring
Like a beacon to the blast?
Guests by hundreds, not one caring
If the dear host's neck were wried:
Past we glide!

She sings.

I

The moth's kiss, first!
Kiss me as if you made believe

You were not sure, this eve,
How my face, your flower, had pursed
Its petals up; so, here and there
You brush it, till I grow aware
Who wants me, and wide ope I burst.

II

The bee's kiss, now!
Kiss me as if you entered gay
My heart at some noonday,
A bud that dares not disallow
The claim, so all is rendered up,
And passively its shattered cup
Over your head to sleep I bow.

He sings.

I

What are we two?
I am a Jew,
And carry thee, farther than friends can pursue,
To a feast of our tribe;
Where they need thee to bribe
The devil that blasts them unless he imbibe
Thy . . . Scatter the vision forever! And now,
As of old, I am I, thou art thou!

II

Say again, what we are?
The sprite of a star,
I lure thee above where the destinies bar
My plumes their full play
Till a ruddier ray
Than my pale one announce there is withering away

Some . . . Scatter the vision forever! And now,
As of old, I am I, thou art thou!

He muses.

Oh, which were best, to roam or rest?
The land's lap or the water's breast?
To sleep on yellow millet-sheaves,
Or swim in lucid shallows just
Eluding water-lily leaves,
An inch from Death's black fingers, thrust
To lock you, whom release he must;
Which life were best on Summer eves?

He speaks, musing.

Lie back; could thought of mine improve you?
From this shoulder let there spring
A wing; from this, another wing;
Wings, not legs and feet, shall move you!
Snow-white must they spring, to blend
With your flesh, but I intend
They shall deepen to the end,
Broader, into burning gold,
Till both wings crescent-wise enfold
Your perfect self, from 'neath your feet
To o'er your head, where, lo, they meet
As if a million sword-blades hurled
Defiance from you to the world!

Rescue me thou, the only real!
And scare away this mad ideal
That came, nor motions to depart!
Thanks! Now, stay ever as thou art!

Still he muses.

I

What if the Three should catch at last
Thy serenader? While there 's cast
Paul's cloak about my head, and fast
Gian pinions me, Himself has past
His stylet thro' my back; I reel;
And . . . is it thou I feel?

II

They trail me, these three godless knaves,
Past every church that saints and saves,
Nor stop till, where the cold sea raves
By Lido's wet accursed graves,
They scoop mine, roll me to its brink,
And . . . on thy breast I sink!

She replies, musing.

Dip your arm o'er the boat-side, elbow-deep,
As I do: thus: were death so unlike sleep,
Caught this way? Death 's to fear from flame or steel,
Or poison doubtless; but from water — feel!
Go find the bottom! Would you stay me? There!
Now pluck a great blade of that ribbon-grass
To plait in where the foolish jewel was,
I flung away: since you have praised my hair,
'T is proper to be choice in what I wear.

He speaks.

Row home? must we row home? Too surely
Know I where its front 's demurely

Over the Giudecca piled;
Window just with window mating,
Door on door exactly waiting,
All 's the set face of a child:
But behind it, where 's a trace
Of the staidness and reserve,
And formal lines without a curve,
In the same child's playing-face?
No two windows look one way
O'er the small sea-water thread
Below them. Ah, the autumn day
I, passing, saw you overhead!
First, out a cloud of curtain blew,
Then a sweet cry, and last came you —
To catch your lory that must needs
Escape just then, of all times then,
To peck a tall plant's fleecy seeds,
And make me happiest of men.
I scarce could breathe to see you reach
So far back o'er the balcony
To catch him ere he climbed too high
Above you in the Smyrna peach
That quick the round smooth cord of gold,
This coiled hair on your head, unrolled,
Fell down you like a gorgeous snake
The Roman girls were wont, of old,
When Rome there was, for coolness' sake
To let lie curling o'er their bosoms.
Dear lory, may his beak retain
Ever its delicate rose stain
As if the wounded lotus-blossoms
Had marked their thief to know again!

Stay longer yet, for others' sake
Than mine! What should your chamber do?

— With all its rarities that ache
In silence while day lasts, but wake
At night-time and their life renew,
Suspended just to pleasure you
Who brought against their will together
These objects, and, while day lasts, weave
Around them such a magic tether
That dumb they look: your harp, believe,
With all the sensitive tight strings
Which dare not speak, now to itself
Breathes slumberously, as if some elf
Went in and out the chords, his wings
Make murmur wheresoe'er they graze,
As an angel may, between the maze
Of midnight palace-pillars, on
And on, to sow God's plagues, have gone
Through guilty glorious Babylon.
And while such murmurs flow, the nymph
Bends o'er the harp-top from her shell
As the dry limpet for the lymph
Come with a tune he knows so well.
And how your statues' hearts must swell!
And how your pictures must descend
To see each other, friend with friend!
Oh, could you take them by surprise,
You 'd find Schidone's eager Duke
Doing the quaintest courtesies
To that prim saint by Haste-thee-Luke!
And, deeper into her rock den,
Bold Castelfranco's Magdalen
You 'd find retreated from the ken
Of that robed counsel-keeping Ser —
As if the Tizian thinks of her,
And is not, rather, gravely bent
On seeing for himself what toys

Are these, his progeny invent,
What litter now the board employs
Whereon he signed a document
That got him murdered! Each enjoys
Its night so well, you cannot break
The sport up, so, indeed must make
More stay with me, for others' sake.

She speaks.

I

To-morrow, if a harp-string, say,
Is used to tie the jasmine back
That overfloods my room with sweets,
Contrive your Zorzi somehow meets
My Zanze! If the ribbon 's black,
The Three are watching: keep away!

II

Your gondola — let Zorzi wreathe
A mesh of water-weeds about
Its prow, as if he unaware
Had struck some quay or bridge-foot stair!
That I may throw a paper out
As you and he go underneath.

There 's Zanze's vigilant taper; safe are we.
Only one minute more to-night with me?
Resume your past self of a month ago!
Be you the bashful gallant, I will be
The lady with the colder breast than snow.
Now bow you, as becomes, nor touch my hand
More than I touch yours when I step to land,
And say, "All thanks, Siora!" —

Heart to heart
And lips to lips! Yet once more, ere we part,
Clasp me and make me thine, as mine thou art!
[*He is surprised, and stabbed.*
It was ordained to be so, sweet! — and best
Comes now, beneath thine eyes, upon thy breast.
Still kiss me! Care not for the cowards! Care
Only to put aside thy beauteous hair
My blood will hurt! The Three, I do not scorn
To death, because they never lived: but I
Have lived indeed, and so — (yet one more kiss) —
can die!

WARING

1842

I

I

What 's become of Waring
Since he gave us all the slip,
Chose land-travel or seafaring,
Boots and chest or staff and scrip,
Rather than pace up and down
Any longer London town?

II

Who 'd have guessed it from his lip
Or his brow's accustomed bearing,
On the night he thus took ship
Or started landward? — little caring
For us, it seems, who supped together
(Friends of his too, I remember)
And walked home thro' the merry weather,
The snowiest in all December.

I left his arm that night myself
For what 's-his-name's, the new prose-poet
Who wrote the book there, on the shelf —
How, forsooth, was I to know it
If Waring meant to glide away
Like a ghost at break of day?
Never looked he half so gay!

III

He was prouder than the devil:
How he must have cursed our revel!
Ay and many other meetings,
Indoor visits, outdoor greetings,
As up and down he paced this London,
With no work done, but great works undone,
Where scarce twenty knew his name.
Why not, then, have earlier spoken,
Written, bustled? Who 's to blame
If your silence kept unbroken?
"True, but there were sundry jottings,
Stray-leaves, fragments, blurs and blottings,
Certain first steps were achieved
Already which" — (is that your meaning?)
"Had well borne out whoe'er believed
In more to come!" But who goes gleaning
Hedgeside chance-glades, while full-sheaved
Stand cornfields by him? Pride, o'erweening
Pride alone, puts forth such claims
O'er the day's distinguished names.

IV

Meantime, how much I loved him,
I find out now I 've lost him.
I who cared not if I moved him,
Who could so carelessly accost him,

Henceforth never shall get free
Of his ghostly company,
His eyes that just a little wink
As deep I go into the merit
Of this and that distinguished spirit —
His cheeks' raised color, soon to sink,
As long I dwell on some stupendous
And tremendous (Heaven defend us!)
Monstr'-inform'-ingens-horrend-ous
Demoniaco-seraphic
Penman's latest piece of graphic.
Nay, my very wrist grows warm
With his dragging weight of arm.
E'en so, swimmingly appears,
Through one's after-supper musings,
Some lost lady of old years
With her beauteous vain endeavor
And goodness unrepaid as ever;
The face, accustomed to refusings,
We, puppies that we were . . . Oh never
Surely, nice of conscience, scrupled
Being aught like false, forsooth, to?
Telling aught but honest truth to?
What a sin, had we centupled
Its possessor's grace and sweetness!
No! she heard in its completeness
Truth, for truth 's a weighty matter,
And truth, at issue, we can't flatter!
Well, 't is done with; she 's exempt
From damning us thro' such a sally;
And so she glides, as down a valley,
Taking up with her contempt,
Past our reach; and in, the flowers
Shut her unregarded hours.

V

On, could I have him back once more,
This Waring, but one half-day more!
Back, with the quiet face of yore,
So hungry for acknowledgment
Like mine! I 'd fool him to his bent.
Fred, should not he, to heart's content?
I 'd say, "to only have conceived,
Planned your great works, apart from progress,
Surpasses little works achieved!"
I 'd lie so, I should be believed.
I 'd make such havoc of the claims
Of the day's distinguished names
To feast him with, as feasts an ogress
Her feverish sharp-toothed gold-crowned child!
Or as one feasts a creature rarely
Captured here, unreconciled
To capture; and completely gives
Its pettish humors license, barely
Requiring that it lives.

VI

Ichabod, Ichabod,
The glory is departed!
Travels Waring East away?
Who, of knowledge, by hearsay,
Reports a man upstarted
Somewhere as a god,
Hordes grown European-hearted,
Millions of the wild made tame
On a sudden at his fame?
In Vishnu-land what Avatar?
Or who in Moscow, toward the Czar,
With the demurest of footfalls

Over the Kremlin's pavement bright
With serpentine and syenite,
Steps, with five other Generals
That simultaneously take snuff,
For each to have pretext enough
And kerchiefwise unfold his sash
Which, softness' self, is yet the stuff
To hold fast where a steel chain snaps,
And leave the grand white neck no gash?
Waring in Moscow, to those rough
Cold northern natures born perhaps,
Like the lambwhite maiden dear
From the circle of mute kings
Unable to repress the tear,
Each as his sceptre down he flings,
To Dian's fane at Taurica,
Where now a captive priestess, she alway
Mingles her tender grave Hellenic speech
With theirs, tuned to the hailstone-beaten beach
As pours some pigeon, from the myrrhy lands
Rapt by the whirlblast to fierce Scythian strands
Where breed the swallows, her melodious cry
Amid their barbarous twitter!
In Russia? Never! Spain were fitter!
Ay, most likely 't is in Spain
That we and Waring meet again
Now, while he turns down that cool narrow lane
Into the blackness, out of grave Madrid
All fire and shine, abrupt as when there 's slid
Its stiff gold blazing pall
From some black coffin-lid.
Or, best of all,
I love to think
The leaving us was just a feint;
Back here to London did he slink,

And now works on without a wink
Of sleep, and we are on the brink
Of something great in fresco-paint:
Some garret's ceiling, walls and floor,
Up and down and o'er and o'er
He splashes, as none splashed before
Since great Caldara Polidore.
Or Music means this land of ours
Some favor yet, to pity won
By Purcell from his Rosy Bowers, —
"Give me my so-long promised son,
Let Waring end what I begun!"
Then down he creeps and out he steals
Only when the night conceals
His face; in Kent 't is cherry-time,
Or hops are picking: or at prime
Of March he wanders as, too happy,
Years ago when he was young,
Some mild eve when woods grew sappy
And the early moths had sprung
To life from many a trembling sheath
Woven the warm boughs beneath;
While small birds said to themselves
What should soon be actual song,
And young gnats, by tens and twelves,
Made as if they were the throng
That crowd around and carry aloft
The sound they have nursed, so sweet and pure,
Out of a myriad noises soft,
Into a tone that can endure
Amid the noise of a July noon
When all God's creatures crave their boon,
All at once and all in tune,
And get it, happy as Waring then,
Having first within his ken

What a man might do with men:
And far too glad, in the even-glow,
To mix with the world he meant to take
Into his hand, he told you, so —
And out of it his world to make,
To contract and to expand
As he shut or oped his hand.
Oh Waring, what 's to really be?
A clear stage and a crowd to see!
Some Garrick, say, out shall not he
The heart of Hamlet's mystery pluck?
Or, where most unclean beasts are rife,
Some Junius — am I right? — shall tuck
His sleeve, and forth with flaying-knife!
Some Chatterton shall have the luck
Of calling Rowley into life!
Some one shall somehow run a muck
With this old world for want of strife
Sound asleep. Contrive, contrive
To rouse us, Waring! Who 's alive?
Our men scarce seem in earnest now.
Distinguished names! — but 't is, somehow,
As if they played at being names
Still more distinguished, like the games
Of children. Turn our sport to earnest
With a visage of the sternest!
Bring the real times back, confessed
Still better than our very best!

II

I

"When I last saw Waring . . ."
(How all turned to him who spoke!

You saw Waring? Truth or joke?
In land-travel or sea-faring?)

II

"We were sailing by Triest
Where a day or two we harbored:
A sunset was in the West,
When, looking over the vessel's side,
One of our company espied
A sudden speck to larboard.
And as a sea-duck flies and swims
At once, so came the light craft up,
With its sole lateen sail that trims
And turns (the water round its rims
Dancing, as round a sinking cup)
And by us like a fish it curled,
And drew itself up close beside,
Its great sail on the instant furled,
And o'er its thwarts a shrill voice cried,
(A neck as bronzed as a Lascar's)
'Buy wine of us, you English Brig?
Or fruit, tobacco and cigars?
A pilot for you to Triest?
Without one, look you ne'er so big,
They 'll never let you up the bay!
We natives should know best.'
I turned, and 'just those fellows' way,'
Our captain said, 'The 'long-shore thieves
Are laughing at us in their sleeves.'

III

"In truth, the boy leaned laughing back;
And one, half-hidden by his side

Under the furled sail, soon I spied,
With great grass hat and kerchief black,
Who looked up with his kingly throat,
Said somewhat, while the other shook
His hair back from his eyes to look
Their longest at us; then the boat,
I know not how, turned sharply round,
Laying her whole side on the sea
As a leaping fish does; from the lee
Into the weather, cut somehow
Her sparkling path beneath our bow
And so went off, as with a bound,
Into the rosy and golden half
O' the sky, to overtake the sun
And reach the shore, like the sea-calf
Its singing cave; yet I caught one
Glance ere away the boat quite passed,
And neither time nor toil could mar
Those features: so I saw the last
Of Waring!" — You? Oh, never star
Was lost here but it rose afar!
Look East, where whole new thousands are!
In Vishnu-land what Avatar?

THE TWINS

"Give" and "It-shall-be-given-unto-you."

1854

I

Grand rough old Martin Luther
Bloomed fables — flowers on furze,
The better the uncouther:
Do roses stick like burrs?

II

A beggar asked an alms
One day at an abbey-door,
Said Luther; but, seized with qualms,
The Abbot replied, "We 're poor!

III

"Poor, who had plenty once,
When gifts fell thick as rain:
But they give us naught, for the nonce,
And how should we give again?"

IV

Then the beggar, "See your sins!
Of old, unless I err,
Ye had brothers for inmates, twins,
Date and Dabitur.

V

"While Date was in good case
Dabitur flourished too:
For Dabitur's lenten face
No wonder if Date rue.

VI

"Would ye retrieve the one?
Try and make plump the other!
When Date's penance is done,
Dabitur helps his brother.

VII

"Only, beware relapse!"
The Abbot hung his head.
This beggar might be perhaps
An angel, Luther said.

A LIGHT WOMAN

1855

I

So far as our story approaches the end,
 Which do you pity the most of us three? —
My friend, or the mistress of my friend
 With her wanton eyes, or me?

II

My friend was already too good to lose,
 And seemed in the way of improvement yet,
When she crossed his path with her hunting-noose
 And over him drew her net.

III

When I saw him tangled in her toils,
 A shame, said I, if she adds just him
To her nine-and-ninety other spoils,
 The hundredth for a whim!

IV

And before my friend be wholly hers,
 How easy to prove to him, I said,
An eagle 's the game her pride prefers,
 Though she snaps at a wren instead!

V

So, I gave her eyes my own eyes to take,
 My hand sought hers as in earnest need,
And round she turned for my noble sake,
 And gave me herself indeed.

VI

The eagle am I, with my fame in the world,
The wren is he, with his maiden face.
— You look away and your lip is curled?
Patience, a moment's space!

VII

For see, my friend goes shaking and white;
He eyes me as the basilisk:
I have turned, it appears, his day to night,
Eclipsing his sun's disk.

VIII

And I did it, he thinks, as a very thief:
"Though I love her — that, he comprehends —
One should master one's passions, (love, in chief)
And be loyal to one's friends!"

IX

And she, — she lies in my hand as tame
As a pear late basking over a wall;
Just a touch to try and off it came;
'T is mine, — can I let it fall?

X

With no mind to eat it, that 's the worst!
Were it thrown in the road, would the case assist?
'T was quenching a dozen blue-flies' thirst
When I gave its stalk a twist

XI

And I, — what I seem to my friend, you see:
What I soon shall seem to his love, you guess:
What I seem to myself, do you ask of me?
No hero, I confess.

XII

'T is an awkward thing to play with souls,
And matter enough to save one's own:
Yet think of my friend, and the burning coals
He played with for bits of stone!

XIII

One likes to show the truth for the truth;
That the woman was light is very true:
But suppose she says, — Never mind that youth!
What wrong have I done to you?

XIV

Well, anyhow, here the story stays,
So far at least as I understand;
And, Robert Browning, you writer of plays,
Here 's a subject made to your hand!

THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER

1855

I

I SAID — Then, dearest, since 't is so,
Since now at length my fate I know,
Since nothing all my love avails,
Since all, my life seemed meant for, fails,
Since this was written and needs must be –
My whole heart rises up to bless
Your name in pride and thankfulness!
Take back the hope you gave, — I claim
Only a memory of the same,
— And this beside, if you will not blame,
Your leave for one more last ride with me.

II

My mistress bent that brow of hers;
Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs
When pity would be softening through,
Fixed me a breathing-while or two
With life or death in the balance: right!
The blood replenished me again;
My last thought was at least not vain:
I and my mistress, side by side
Shall be together, breathe and ride,
So, one day more am I deified.
Who knows but the world may end to-night?

III

Hush! if you saw some western cloud
All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed
By many benedictions — sun's
And moon's and evening-star's at once —
And so, you, looking and loving best,
Conscious grew, your passion drew
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,
Down on you, near and yet more near,
Till flesh must fade for heaven was here! —
Thus leant she and lingered — joy and fear!
Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

IV

Then we began to ride. My soul
Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
Past hopes already lay behind.
What need to strive with a life awry?

Had I said that, had I done this,
So might I gain, so might I miss.
Might she have loved me? just as well
She might have hated, who can tell!
Where had I been now if the worst befell?
And here we are riding, she and I.

V

Fail I alone, in words and deeds?
Why, all men strive and who succeeds?
We rode; it seemed my spirit flew,
Saw other regions, cities new,
As the world rushed by on either side.
I thought, — All labor, yet no less
Bear up beneath their unsuccess.
Look at the end of work, contrast
The petty done, the undone vast,
This present of theirs with the hopeful past!
I hoped she would love me; here we ride.

VI

What hand and brain went ever paired?
What heart alike conceived and dared?
What act proved all its thought had been?
What will but felt the fleshy screen?
We ride and I see her bosom heave.
There 's many a crown for who can reach.
Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!
The flag stuck on a heap of bones,
A soldier's doing! what atones?
They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones.
My riding is better, by their leave.

VII

What does it all mean, poet? Well,
Your brains beat into rhythm, you tell
What we felt only; you expressed
You hold things beautiful the best,
 And pace them in rhyme so, side by side.
'T is something, nay 't is much: but then,
Have you yourself what 's best for men?
Are you — poor, sick, old ere your time —
Nearer one whit your own sublime
Than we who never have turned a rhyme?
 Sing, riding 's a joy! For me, I ride.

VIII

And you, great sculptor — so, you gave
A score of years to Art, her slave,
And that 's your Venus, whence we turn
To yonder girl that fords the burn!
 You acquiesce, and shall I repine?
What, man of music, you grown gray
With notes and nothing else to say,
Is this your sole praise from a friend,
"Greatly his opera's strains intend,
But in music we know how fashions end!"
 I gave my youth; but we ride, in fine.

IX

Who knows what 's fit for us? Had fate
Proposed bliss here should sublimate
My being — had I signed the bond —
Still one must lead some life beyond,
 Have a bliss to die with, dim-descried.
This foot once planted on the goal,

This glory-garland round my soul,
Could I descry such? Try and test!
I sink back shuddering from the quest.
Earth being so good, would heaven seem best?
Now, heaven and she are beyond this ride.

X

And yet — she has not spoke so long!
What if heaven be that, fair and strong
At life's best, with our eyes upturned
Whither life's flower is first discerned,
We, fixed so, ever should so abide?
What if we still ride on, we two
With life forever old yet new,
Changed not in kind but in degree,
The instant made eternity, —
And heaven just prove that I and she
Ride, ride together, forever ride?

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

A CHILD'S STORY

(*Written for, and inscribed to, W. M. the Younger*)

1842

I

HAMELIN Town 's in Brunswick,
By famous Hanover city;
The river Weser, deep and wide,
Washes its wall on the southern side;

A pleasanter spot you never spied;
 But, when begins my ditty,
Almost five hundred years ago,
To see the townsfolk suffer so
 From vermin, was a pity.

II

 Rats!
They fought the dogs and killed the cats,
 And bit the babies in the cradles,
And ate the cheeses out of the vats,
 And licked the soup from the cooks' own ladles,
Split open the kegs of salted sprats,
Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,
And even spoiled the women's chats
 By drowning their speaking
 With shrieking and squeaking
In fifty different sharps and flats.

III

At last the people in a body
 To the Town Hall came flocking:
"'T is clear," cried they, "our Mayor 's a noddy;
 And as for our Corporation — shocking
To think we buy gowns lined with ermine
For dolts that can't or won't determine
What 's best to rid us of our vermin!
You hope, because you 're old and obese,
To find in the furry civic robe ease?
Rouse up, sirs! Give your brains a racking
To find the remedy we 're lacking,
Or, sure as fate, we 'll send you packing!"
At this the Mayor and Corporation
Quaked with a mighty consternation.

IV

An hour they sat in council,
At length the Mayor broke silence:
"For a guilder I 'd my ermine gown sell,
I wish I were a mile hence!
It 's easy to bid one rack one's brain —
I 'm sure my poor head aches again,
I 've scratched it so, and all in vain.
Oh for a trap, a trap, a trap!"
Just as he said this, what should hap
At the chamber door but a gentle tap?
"Bless us," cried the Mayor, "what 's that?"
(With the Corporation as he sat,
Looking little though wondrous fat;
Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister
Than a too-long-opened oyster,
Save when at noon his paunch grew mutinous
For a plate of turtle green and glutinous)
"Only a scraping of shoes on the mat?
Anything like the sound of a rat
Makes my heart go pit-a-pat!"

V

"Come in!" — the Mayor cried, looking bigger:
And in did come the strangest figure!
His queer long coat from heel to head
Was half of yellow and half of red,
And he himself was tall and thin,
With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin,
And light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,
No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,
But lips where smiles went out and in;
There was no guessing his kith and kin:
And nobody could enough admire

The Rats

(Drawing by Willy Pogány)

"They fought the dogs and killed the cats,

.

And even spoiled the women's chats
By drowning their speaking
With shrieking and squeaking
In fifty different sharps and flats."

— The Pied Piper of Hamelin.



The tall man and his quaint attire.
Quoth one: "It is as my great-grandsire,
Starting up at the Trump of Doom's tone,
Had walked this way from his painted tombstone!"

VI

He advanced to the council-table:
And, "Please you honors," said he, "I 'm able,
By means of a secret charm, to draw
All creatures living beneath the sun,
That creep to swim or fly or run,
After me so as you never saw!
And I chiefly use my charm
On creatures that do people harm,
The mole and toad and newt and viper;
And people call me the Pied Piper."
(And here they noticed round his neck
A scarf of red and yellow stripe,
To match with his coat of the self-same cheque;
And at the scarf's end hung a pipe;
And his fingers, they noticed, were ever straying
As if impatient to be playing
Upon this pipe, as low it dangled
Over his vesture so old-fangled.)
"Yet," said he, "poor piper as I am,
In Tartary I freed the Cham,
Last June, from his huge swarms of gnats;
I eased in Asia the Nizam
Of a monstrous brood of vampyre-bats:
And as for what your brain bewilders,
If I can rid your town of rats
Will you give me a thousand guilders?"
"One? fifty thousand!" — was the exclamation
Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

VII

Into the street the Piper stept,
Smiling first a little smile,
As if he knew what magic slept
In his quiet pipe the while;
Then, like a musical adept,
To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,
And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled,
Like a candle-flame where salt is sprinkled;
And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,
You heard as if an army muttered;
And the muttering grew to a grumbling;
And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling;
And out of the houses the rats came tumbling.
Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,
Brown rats, black rats, gray rats, tawny rats,
Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,
Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,
Cocking tails and pricking whiskers,
Families by tens and dozens,
Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives —
Followed the Piper for their lives.
From street to street he piped advancing,
And step for step they followed dancing,
Until they came to the river Weser,
Wherein all plunged and perished!
— Save one who, stout as Julius Cæsar,
Swam across and lived to carry
(As he, the manuscript he cherished)
To Rat-land home his commentary:
Which was, "At the first shrill notes of the pipe,
I heard a sound as of scraping tripe,
And putting apples, wondrous ripe,
Into a cider-press's gripe:

And a moving away of pickle-tub-boards,
And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,
And a drawing the corks of train-oil-flasks,
And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks:
And it seemed as if a voice
(Sweeter far than by harp or by psaltery
Is breathed) called out, 'Oh rats, rejoice!
The world is grown to one vast drysaltery!
So munch on, crunch on, take your nuncheon,
Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon!'
And just as a bulky sugar-puncheon,
All ready staved, like a great sun shone
Glorious scarce an inch before me,
Just as methought it said, 'Come, bore me!'
— I found the Weser rolling o'er me."

VIII

You should have heard the Hamelin people
Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple.
"Go," cried the Mayor, "and get long poles,
Poke out the nests and block up the holes!
Consult with carpenters and builders,
And leave in our town not even a trace
Of the rats!" — when suddenly, up the face
Of the Piper perked in the market-place,
With a, "First, if you please, my thousand guilders!"

IX

A thousand guilders! The Mayor looked blue;
So did the Corporation too.
For council dinners made rare havoc
With Claret, Noselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hock;
And half the money would replenish

Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish.
To pay this sum to a wandering fellow
With a gipsy coat of red and yellow!
"Beside," quoth the Mayor with a knowing wink,
"Our business was done at the river's brink;
We saw with our eyes the vermin sink,
And what 's dead can't come to life, I think.
So, friend, we 're not the folks to shrink
From the duty of giving you something for drink,
And a matter of money to put in your poke;
But as for the guilders, what we spoke
Of them, as you very well know, was in joke.
Beside, our losses have made us thrifty.
A thousand guilders! Come, take fifty!"

X

The Piper's face fell, and he cried
"No trifling! I can't wait, beside!
I 've promised to visit by dinnertime
Bagdat, and accept the prime
Of the Head-Cook's pottage, all he 's rich in,
For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen,
Of a nest of scorpions no survivor:
With him I proved no bargain-driver,
With you, don't think I 'll bate a stiver!
And folks who put me in a passion
May find me pipe after another fashion."

XI

"How?" cried the Mayor, "d' ye think I brook
Being worse treated than a Cook?
Insulted by a lazy ribald
With idle pipe and vesture piebald?
You threaten us, fellow? Do your worst,
Blow your pipe there till you burst!"

XII

Once more he stept into the street
And to his lips again
Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane;
And ere he blew three notes (such sweet
Soft notes as yet musician's cunning
Never gave the enraptured air)
There was a rustling that seemed like a bustling
Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling,
Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering,
Little hands clapping and little tongues chattering,
And, like fowls in a farm-yard when barley is scattering,
Out came the children running.
All the little boys and girls,
With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,
And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls,
Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after
The wonderful music with shouting and laughter.

XIII

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood
As if they were changed into blocks of wood,
Unable to move a step, or cry
To the children merrily skipping by,
— Could only follow with the eye
That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.
But how the Mayor was on the rack,
And the wretched Council's bosoms beat,
As the Piper turned from the High Street
To where the Weser rolled its waters
Right in the way of their sons and daughters!
However he turned from South to West,
And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed,

And after him the children pressed;
Great was the joy in every breast.
"He never can cross that mighty top!
He 's forced to let the piping drop,
And we shall see our children stop!"
When, lo, as they reached the mountain-side,
A wondrous portal opened wide,
As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed;
And the Piper advanced and the children followed,
And when all were in to the very last,
The door in the mountain-side shut fast.
Did I say, all? No! One was lame,
And could not dance the whole of the way;
And in after years, if you would blame
His sadness, he was used to say, —
"It 's dull in our town since my playmates left!
I can't forget that I 'm bereft
Of all the pleasant sights they see,
Which the Piper also promised me.
For he led us, he said, to a joyous land,
Joining the town and just at hand,
Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew
And flowers put forth a fairer hue,
And everything was strange and new;
The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here,
And their dogs outran our fallow deer,
And honey-bees had lost their stings,
And horses were born with eagles' wings:
And just as I became assured
My lame foot would be speedily cured,
The music stopped and I stood still,
And found myself outside the hill,
Left alone against my will,
To go now limping as before,
And never hear of that country more!"

XIV

Alas, alas for Hamelin!
There came into many a burgher's pate
A text which says that heaven's gate
Opes to the rich at as easy rate
As the needle's eye takes a camel in!
The mayor sent East, West, North and South,
To offer the Piper, by word of mouth,
Wherever it was men's lot to find him,
Silver and gold to his heart's content,
If he 'd only return the way he went,
And bring the children behind him.
But when they saw 't was a lost endeavor,
And Piper and dancers were gone forever,
They made a decree that lawyers never
Should think their records dated duly
If, after the day of the month and year,
These words did not as well appear,
"And so long after what happened here
On the Twenty-second of July,
Thirteen hundred and seventy-six:"
And the better in memory to fix
The place of the children's last retreat,
They called it, the Pied Piper's Street —
Where any one playing on pipe or tabor
Was sure for the future to lose his labor.
Nor suffered they hostelry or tavern
To shock with mirth a street so solemn;
But opposite the place of the cavern
They wrote the story on a column,
And on the great church-window painted
The same, to make the world acquainted
How their children were stolen away,
And there it stands to this very day.

And I must not omit to say
That in Transylvania there 's a tribe
Of alien people who ascribe
The outlandish ways and dress
On which their neighbors lay such stress,
To their fathers and mothers having risen
Out of some subterraneous prison
Into which they were trepanned
Long time ago in a mighty band
Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,
But how or why, they don't understand.

XV

So, Willy, let me and you be wipers
Of scores out with all men — especially pipers!
And, whether they pipe us free fróm rats or fróm mice,
If we've promised them aught, let us keep our promise!

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

1845

I

You 're my friend:
I was the man the Duke spoke to;
I helped the Duchess to cast off his yoke, too;
So here 's the tale from beginning to end,
My friend!

II

Ours is a great wild country:
If you climb to our castle's top,
I don't see where your eye can stop;

For when you 've passed the cornfield country,
Where vineyards leave off, flocks are packed,
And sheep-range leads to cattle-tract,
And cattle-tract to open-chase,
And open-chase to the very base
Of the mountain where, at a funeral pace,
Round about, solemn and slow,
One by one, row after row,
Up and up the pine-trees go,
So, like black priests up, and so
Down the other side again
To another greater, wilder country,
That 's one vast red drear burnt-up plain,
Branched through and through with many a vein
Whence iron 's dug, and copper 's dealt;
Look right, look left, look straight before, —
Beneath they mine, above they smelt,
Copper-ore and iron-ore,
And forge and furnace mould and melt,
And so on, more and ever more,
Till at the last, for a bounding belt,
Comes the salt sand hoar of the great sea-shore,
— And the whole is our Duke's country.

III

I was born the day this present Duke was —
(And O, says the song, ere I was old!)
In the castle where the other Duke was —
(When I was happy and young, not old!)
I in the kennel, he in the bower:
We are of like age to an hour.
My father was huntsman in that day;
Who has not heard my father say
That, when a boar was brought to bay,

Three times, four times out of five,
With his huntspear he 'd contrive
To get the killing-place transfixed,
And pin him true, both eyes betwixt?
And that 's why the old Duke would rather
He lost a salt-pit than my father,
And loved to have him ever in call;
That 's why my father stood in the hall
When the old Duke brought his infant out
To show the people, and while they passed
The wondrous bantling round about,
Was first to start at the outside blast
As the Kaiser's courier blew his horn
Just a month after the babe was born.
"And," quoth the Kaiser's courier, "since
The Duke has got an heir, our Prince
Needs the Duke's self at his side:"
The Duke looked down and seemed to wince,
But he thought of wars o'er the world wide,
Castles a-fire, men on their march,
The toppling tower, the crashing arch;
And up he looked, and awhile he eyed
The row of crests and shields and banners
Of all achievements after all manners,
And "ay," said the Duke with a surly pride.
The more was his comfort when he died
At next year's end, in a velvet suit,
With a gilt glove on his hand, his foot
In a silken shoe for a leather boot,
Petticoated like a herald,
In a chamber next to an ante-room,
Where he breathed the breath of page and groom,
What he called stink, and they, perfume:
— They should have set him on red Berold
Mad with pride, like fire to manage!

They should have got his cheek fresh tannage
Such a day as to-day in the merry sunshine!
Had they stuck on his fist a rough-foot merlin!
(Hark, the wind 's on the heath at its game!
Oh for a noble falcon-lanner
To flap each broad wing like a banner,
And turn in the wind, and dance like flame!)
Had they broached a white-beer cask from Berlin
— Or if you incline to prescribe mere wine
Put to his lips, when they saw him pine,
A cup of our own Moldavia fine,
Cotnar for instance, green as May sorrel
And ropy with sweet, — we shall not quarrel.

IV

So, at home, the sick tall yellow Duchess
Was left with the infant in her clutches,
She being the daughter of God knows who:
And now was the time to revisit her tribe.
Abroad and afar they went, the two,
And let our people rail and gibe
At the empty hall and extinguished fire,
As loud as we liked, but ever in vain,
Till after long years we had our desire,
And back came the Duke and his mother again.

V

And he came back the pertest little ape
That ever affronted human shape;
Full of his travel, struck at himself.
You 'd say, he despised our bluff old ways?
— Not he! For in Paris they told the elf
Our rough North land was the Land of Lays,
The one good thing left in evil days;

Since the Mid-Age was the Heroic Time,
And only in wild nooks like ours
Could you taste of it yet as in its prime,
And see true castles, with proper towers,
Young-hearted women, old-minded men,
And manners now as manners were then.
So, all the old Dukes had been, without knowing it,
This Duke would fain know he was, without being it;
'Twas not for the joy's self, but the joy of his showing it,
Nor for the pride's self, but the pride of our seeing it,
He revived all usages thoroughly worn-out,
The souls of them fumed-forth, the hearts of them torn-out:
And chief in the chase his neck he perilled
On a lathy horse, all legs and length,
With blood for bone, all speed, no strength;
— They should have set him on red Berold
With the red eye slow consuming in fire,
And the thin stiff ear like an abbey-spire!

VI

Well, such as he was, he must marry, we heard:
And out of a convent, at the word,
Came the lady, in time of spring.
— Oh, old thoughts they cling, they cling!
That day, I know, with a dozen oaths
I clad myself in thick hunting-clothes
Fit for the chase of urocks or buffle
In winter-time when you need to muffle.
But the Duke had a mind we should cut a figure,
And so we saw the lady arrive:

My friend, I have seen a white crane bigger!
She was the smallest lady alive,
Made in a piece of nature's madness,
Too small, almost, for the life and gladness
That over-filled her, as some hive
Out of the bears' reach on the high trees
Is crowded with its safe merry bees:
In truth, she was not hard to please!
Up she looked, down she looked, round at the mead,
Straight at the castle, that 's best indeed
To look at from outside the walls:
As for us, styled the "serfs and thralls,"
She as much thanked me as if she had said it,
(With her eyes, do you understand?)
Because I patted her horse while I led it;
And Max, who rode on her other hand,
Said, no bird flew past but she inquired
What its true name was, nor ever seemed tired —
If that was an eagle she saw hover,
And the green and gray bird on the field was the plover.
When suddenly appeared the Duke:
And as down she sprung, the small foot pointed
On to my hand, — as with a rebuke,
And as if his backbone were not jointed,
The Duke stepped rather aside than forward,
And welcomed her with his grandest smile;
And, mind you, his mother all the while
Chilled in the rear, like a wind to Nor'ward;
And up, like a weary yawn, with its pulleys
Went, in a shriek, the rusty portcullis;
And, like a glad sky the north-wind sullies,
The lady's face stopped its play,
As if her first hair had grown gray;
For such things must begin some one day.

VII

In a day or two she was well again;
As who should say, "You labor in vain!
This is all a jest against God, who meant
I should ever be, as I am, content
And glad in his sight; therefore, glad I will be."
So, smiling as at first went she.

VIII

She was active, stirring, all fire —
Could not rest, could not tire —
To a stone she might have given life!
(I myself loved once, in my day)
— For a shepherd's, miner's, huntsman's wife,
(I had a wife, I know what I say)
Never in all the world such an one!
And here was plenty to be done,
And she that could do it, great or small,
She was to do nothing at all.
There was already this man in his post,
This in his station, and that in his office,
And the Duke's plan admitted a wife, at most,
To meet his eye, with the other trophies,
Now outside the hall, now in it,
To sit thus, stand thus, see and be seen,
At the proper place in the proper minute,
And die away the life between.
And it was amusing enough, each infraction
Of rule — (but for after-sadness that came)
To hear the consummate self-satisfaction
With which the young Duke and the old dame
Would let her advise, and criticise,
And, being a fool, instruct the wise,
And, child-like, parcel out praise or blame:

They bore it all in complacent guise,
As though an artificer, after contriving
A wheel-work image as if it were living,
Should find with delight it could motion to strike him!
So found the Duke, and his mother like him:
The lady hardly got a rebuff —
That had not been contemptuous enough,
With his cursed smirk, as he nodded applause,
And kept off the old mother-cat's claws.

IX

So, the little lady grew silent and thin,
Paling and ever paling,
As the way is with a hid chagrin;
And the Duke perceived that she was ailing,
And said in his heart, "'T is done to spite me,
But I shall find in my power to right me!"
Don't swear, friend! The old one, many a year,
Is in hell, and the Duke's self . . . you shall hear.

X

Well, early in autumn, at first winter-warning,
When the stag had to break with his foot, of a morning,
A drinking-hole out of the fresh tender ice
That covered the pond till the sun, in a trice,
Loosening it, let out a ripple of gold,
And another and another, and faster and faster,
Till, dimpling to blindness, the wide water rolled:
Then it so chanced that the Duke our master
Asked himself what were the pleasures in season,
And found, since the calendar bade him be hearty,
He should do the Middle Age no treason
In resolving on a hunting-party.

Always provided, old books showed the way of it!
What meant old poets by their strictures?
And when old poets had said their say of it,
How taught old painters in their pictures?
We must revert to the proper channels,
Workings in tapestry, paintings on panels,
And gather up woodcraft's authentic traditions:
Here was food for our various ambitions,
As on each case, exactly stated —
To encourage your dog, now, the properest chirrup,
Or best prayer to Saint Hubert on mounting your stirrup —
We of the household took thought and debated.
Blessed was he whose back ached with the jerkin
His sire was wont to do forest-work in;
Blesseder he who nobly sunk "ohs"
And "ahs" while he tugged on his grandsire's trunk-hose;
What signified hats if they had no rims on,
Each slouching before and behind like the scallop,
And able to serve at sea for a shallop,
Loaded with lacquer and looped with crimson?
So that the deer now, to make a short rhyme on 't,
What with our Veneers, Prickers and Verderers,
Might hope for real hunters at length and not murderers,
And oh the Duke's tailor, he had a hot time on 't!

XI

Now you must know that when the first dizziness
Of flap-hats and buff-coats and jack-boots subsided,
The Duke put this question, "The Duke's part provided,
Had not the Duchess some share in the business?"

For out of the mouth of two or three witnesses
Did he establish all fit-or-unfitnesses:
And, after much laying of heads together,
Somebody's cap got a notable feather
By the announcement with proper unction
That he had discovered the lady's function;
Since ancient authors gave this tenet,
"When horns wind a mort and the deer is at siege,
Let the dame of the castle prick forth on her jennet,
And, with water to wash the hands of her liege
In a clean ewer with a fair toweling,
Let her preside at the disemboweling."
Now, my friend, if you had so little religion
As to catch a hawk, some falcon-lanner,
And thrust her broad wings like a banner
Into a coop for a vulgar pigeon:
And if day by day and week by week
You cut her claws, and sealed her eyes,
And clipped her wings, and tied her beak,
Would it cause you any great surprise
If, when you decided to give her an airing,
You found she needed a little preparing?
— I say, should you be such a curmudgeon,
If she clung to the perch, as to take it in dudgeon?
Yet when the Duke to his lady signified,
Just a day before, as he judged most dignified,
In what a pleasure she was to participate, —
And, instead of leaping wide in flashes,
Her eyes just lifted their long lashes,
As if pressed by fatigue even he could not dissipate,
And duly acknowledged the Duke's forethought,
But spoke of her health, if her health were worth aught,
Of the weight by day and the watch by night,
And much wrong now that used to be right,

So, thanking him, declined the hunting, —
Was conduct ever more affronting?
With all the ceremony settled —
With the towel ready, and the sewer
Polishing up his oldest ewer,
And the jennet pitched upon, a piebald,
Black-barred, cream-coated and pink eyeballed, —
No wonder if the Duke was nettled!
And when she persisted nevertheless, —
Well, I suppose here 's the time to confess
That there ran half round our lady's chamber
A balcony none of the hardest to clamber;
And that Jacynth the tire-woman, ready in waiting,
Stayed in call outside, what need of relating?
And since Jacynth was like a June rose, why, a fervent
Adorer of Jacynth of course was your servant;
And if she had the habit to peep through the casement,
How could I keep at any vast distance?
And so, as I say, on the lady's persistence,
The Duke, dumb-stricken with amazement,
Stood for a while in a sultry smother,
And then, with a smile that partook of the awful,
Turned her over to his yellow mother
To learn what was held decorous and lawful;
And the mother smelt blood with a cat-like instinct,
As her cheek quick whitened thro' all its quince-tinct.
Oh, but the lady heard the whole truth at once!
What meant she? — Who was she? — Her duty and station,
The wisdom of age and the folly of youth, at once,
Its decent regard and its fitting relation —
In brief, my friend, set all the devils in hell free
And turn them out to carouse in a belfry,

And treat the priests to a fifty-part canon,
And then you may guess how that tongue of hers ran on!
Well, somehow or other it ended at last
And, licking her whiskers, out she passed;
And after her, — making (he hoped) a face
Like Emperor Nero or Sultan Saladin,
Stalked the Duke's self with the austere grace
Of ancient hero or modern paladin,
From door to staircase — oh such a solemn
Unbending of the vertebral column!

XII

However, at sunrise our company mustered;
And here was the huntsman bidding unkennel,
And there 'neath his bonnet the pricker blustered,
With feather dank as a bough of wet fennel;
For the court-yard walls were filled with fog
You might have cut as an axe chops a log —
Like so much wool for color and bulkiness;
And out rode the Duke in a perfect sulkiness,
Since, before breakfast, a man feels but queasily,
And a sinking at the lower abdomen
Begins the day with indifferent omen.
And lo, as he looked around uneasily,
The sun ploughed the fog up and drove it asunder
This way and that from the valley under;
And, looking through the court-yard arch,
Down in the valley, what should meet him
But a troop of Gipsies on their march?
No doubt with the annual gifts to greet him.

XIII

Now, in your hand, Gipsies reach you, only
After reaching all lands beside;

North they go, South they go, trooping or lonely,
And still, as they travel far and wide,
Catch they and keep now a trace here, a trace there,
That puts you in mind of a place here, a place there.
But with us, I believe they rise out of the ground,
And nowhere else, I take it, are found
With the earth-tint yet so freshly embrowned:
Born, no doubt, like insects which breed on
The very fruit they are meant to feed on.
For the earth — not a use to which they don't turn it,
The ore that grows in the mountain's womb,
Or the sand in the pits like a honeycomb,
They sift and soften it, bake it and burn it —
Whether they weld you, for instance, a snaffle
With side-bars never a brute can baffle;
Or a lock that 's a puzzle of wards within wards;
Or, if your colt's fore-foot inclines to curve inwards,
Horseshoes they hammer which turn on a swivel
And won't allow the hoof to shrivel.
Then they cast bells like the shell of the winkle
That keep a stout heart in the ram with their tinkle;
But the sand — they pinch and pound it like otters;
Commend me to Gipsy glass-makers and potters!
Glasses they 'll blow you, crystal-clear,
Where just a faint cloud of rose shall appear,
As if in pure water you dropped and let die
A bruised black-blooded mulberry;
And that other sort, their crowning pride,
With long white threads distinct inside,
Like the lake-flower's fibrous roots which dangle
Loose such a length and never tangle,
Where the bold sword-lily cuts the clear waters,
And the cup-lily couches with all the white daughters:
Such are the works they put their hand to,

The uses they turn and twist iron and sand to.
And these made the troop, which our Duke saw sally
Toward his castle from out of the valley,
Men and women, like new-hatched spiders,
Come out with the morning to greet our riders.
And up they wound till they reached the ditch
Whereat all stopped save one, a witch
That I knew, as she hobbled from the group,
By her gait directly and her stoop,
I, whom Jacynth was used to importune
To let that same witch tell us our fortune.
The oldest Gipsy then above ground;
And, sure as the autumn season came round,
She paid us a visit for profit or pastime,
And every time, as she swore, for the last time.
And presently she was seen to sidle
Up to the Duke till she touched his bridle,
So that the horse of a sudden reared up
As under its nose the old witch peered up
With her worn-out eyes, or rather eye-holes
 Of no use now but to gather brine,
 And began a kind of level whine
Such as they used to sing to their viols
When their ditties they go grinding
Up and down with nobody minding:
And then, as of old, at the end of the humming
Her usual presents were forthcoming
— A dog-whistle blowing the fiercest of trebles,
(Just a sea-shore stone holding a dozen fine pebbles,)
Or a porcelain mouth-piece to screw on a pipe-end,—
And so she awaited her annual stipend.
But this time, the Duke would scarcely vouchsafe
 A word in reply; and in vain she felt
 With twitching fingers at her belt
 For the purse of sleek pine-martin pelt

Ready to put what he gave in her pouch safe, —
Till, either to quicken his apprehension,
Or possibly with an after-intention,
She was come, she said, to pay her duty
To the new Duchess, the youthful beauty.
No sooner had she named his lady,
Than a shine lit up the face so shady,
And its smirk returned with a novel meaning —
For it struck him, the babe just wanted weaning;
If one gave her a taste of what life was and sorrow,
She, foolish to-day, would be wiser to-morrow;
And who so fit a teacher of trouble
As this sordid crone bent well-nigh double?
So, glancing at her wolf-skin vesture,
(If such it was, for they grow so hirsute
That their own fleece serves for natural fur-suit)
He was contrasting, 't was plain from his gesture,
The life of the lady so flower-like and delicate
With the loathsome squalor of this helicat.
I, in brief, was the man the Duke beckoned
From out of the throng, and while I drew near
He told the crone — as I since have reckoned
By the way he bent and spoke into her ear
With circumspection and mystery —
The main of the lady's history,
Her forwardness and ingratitude:
And for all the crone's submissive attitude
I could see round her mouth the loose plaits tightening,
And her brow with assenting intelligence brightening,
As though she engaged with hearty good-will
Whatever he now might enjoin to fulfil,
And promised the lady a thorough frightening.
And so, just giving her a glimpse

Of a purse, with the air of a man who imps
The wing of the hawk that shall fetch the hernshaw,
He bade me take the Gypsy mother
And set her telling some story or other
Of hill or dale, oak-wood or fernshaw,
To wile away a weary hour
For the lady left alone in her bower,
Whose mind and body craved exertion
And yet shrank from all better diversion.

XIV

Then clapping heel to his horse, the mere curveter,
Out rode the Duke, and after his hollo
Horses and hounds swept, huntsman and servitor,
And back I turned and bade the crone follow.
And what makes me confident what 's to be told you
Had all along been of this crone's devising,
Is, that, on looking round sharply, behold you,
There was a novelty quick as surprising:
For first, she had shot up a full head in stature,
And her step kept pace with mine nor faltered,
As if age had foregone its usurpature,
And the ignoble mien was wholly altered,
And the face looked quite of another nature,
And the change reached too, whatever the change meant,
Her shaggy wolf-skin cloak's arrangement:
For where its tatters hung loose like sedges,
Gold coins were glittering on the edges,
Like the band-roll strung with tomans
Which proves the veil a Persian woman's:
And under her brow, like a snail's horns newly
Come out as after the rain he paces,
Two unmistakable eye-points duly

Live and aware looked out of their places.
So, we went and found Jacynth at the entry
Of the lady's chamber standing sentry;
I told the command and produced my companion,
And Jacynth rejoiced to admit any one,
For since last night, by the same token,
Not a single word had the lady spoken:
They went in both to the presence together,
While I in the balcony watched the weather.

XV

And now, what took place at the very first of all,
I cannot tell, as I never could learn it:
Jacynth constantly wished a curse to fall
On that little head of hers and burn it
If she knew how she came to drop so soundly
Asleep of a sudden and there continue
The whole time sleeping as profoundly
As one of the boars my father would pin you
'Twixt the eyes where life holds garrison,
— Jacynth forgive me the comparison!
But where I begin my own narration
Is a little after I took my station
To breathe the fresh air from the balcony,
And, having in those days a falcon eye,
To follow the hunt thro' the open country,
From where the bushes thinlier crested
The hillocks, to a plain where 's not one tree.
When, in a moment, my ear was arrested
By — was it singing, or was it saying,
Or a strange musical instrument playing
In the chamber? — and to be certain
I pushed the lattice, pulled the curtain,
And there lay Jacynth asleep,
Yet as if a watch she tried to keep,

In a rosy sleep along the floor
With her head against the door;
While in the midst, on the seat of state,
Was a queen — the Gipsy woman late,
With head and face downbent
On the lady's head and face intent:
For, coiled at her feet like a child at ease,
The lady sat between her knees
And o'er them the lady's clasped hands met,
And on those hands her chin was set,
And her upturned face met the face of the crone
Wherein the eyes had grown and grown
As if she could double and quadruple
At pleasure the play of either pupil
— Very like, by her hands' slow fanning,
As up and down like a gor-crow's flappers
They moved to measure, or bell-clappers.
I said "Is it blessing, is it banning,
Do they applaud you or burlesque you —
Those hands and fingers with no flesh on?"
But, just as I thought to spring in to the rescue,
At once I was stopped by the lady's expression:
For it was life her eyes were drinking
From the crone's wide pair above unwinking,
— Life's pure fire received without shrinking,
Into the heart and breast whose heaving
Told you no single drop they were leaving,
— Life, that filling her, passed redundant
Into her very hair, back swerving
Over each shoulder, loose and abundant,
As her head thrown back showed the white
throat curving;
And the very tresses shared in the pleasure,
Moving to the mystic measure,
Bounding as the bosom bounded.

I stopped short, more and more confounded,
As still her cheeks burned and eyes glistened,
As she listened and she listened:
When all at once a hand detained me,
The selfsame contagion gained me,
And I kept time to the wondrous chime,
Making out words and prose and rhyme,
Till it seemed that the music furled
Its wings like a task fulfilled, and dropped
From under the words it first had propped,
And left them midway in the world:
Word took word as hand takes hand,
I could hear at last, and understand,
And when I held the unbroken thread,
The Gipsy said: —

"And so at last we find my tribe.
And so I set thee in the midst,
And to one and all of them describe
What thou saidst and what thou didst,
Our long and terrible journey through,
And all thou art ready to say and do
In the trials that remain:
I trace them the vein and the other vein
That meet on thy brow and part again,
Making our rapid mystic mark;
And I bid my people prove and probe
Each eye's profound and glorious globe
Till they detect the kindred spark
In those depths so dear and dark,
Like the spots that snap and burst and flee,
Circling over the midnight sea.
And on that round young cheek of thine
I make them recognize the tinge,
As when of the costly scarlet wine

They drip so much as will impinge
And spread in a thinnest scale afloat
One thick gold drop from the olive's coat
Over a silver plate whose sheen
Still thro' the mixture shall be seen.
For so I prove thee, to one and all,
Fit, when my people ope their breast,
To see the sign, and hear the call,
And take the vow, and stand the test
Which adds one more child to the rest —
When the breast is bare and the arms are wide,
And the world is left outside.
For there is probation to decree,
And many and long must the trials be
Thou shalt victoriously endure,
If that brow is true and those eyes are sure;
Like a jewel-finder's fierce assay
Of the prize he dug from its mountain-tomb —
Let once the vindicating ray
Leap out amid the anxious gloom,
And steel and fire have done their part
And the prize falls on its finder's heart;
So, trial after trial past,
Wilt thou fall at the very last
Breathless, half in trance
With the thrill of the great deliverance,
Into our arms for evermore;
And thou shalt know, those arms once curled
About thee, what we knew before,
How love is the only good in the world.
Henceforth be loved as heart can love,
Or brain devise, or hand approve!
Stand up, look below,
It is our life at thy feet we throw
To step with into light and joy;

Not a power of life but we employ
To satisfy thy nature's wants;
Art thou the tree that props the plant,
Or the climbing plant that seeks the tree —
Canst thou help us, must we help thee?
If any two creatures grew into one,
They would do more than the world has done:
Though each apart were never so weak,
Ye vainly through the world should seek
For the knowledge and the might
Which in such union grew their right:
So, to approach at least that end,
And blend, — as much as may be, blend
Thee with us or us with thee, —
As climbing plant or propping tree,
Shall some one deck thee, over and down,
 Up and about, with blossoms and leaves?
Fix his heart's fruit for thy garland-crown,
 Cling with his soul as the gourd-vine cleaves,
Die on thy boughs and disappear
While not a leaf of thine is sere?
Or is the other fate in store,
And art thou fitted to adore,
To give thy wondrous self away,
And take a stronger nature's sway?
I foresee and could foretell
Thy future portion, sure and well:
But those passionate eyes speak true, speak true,
Let them say what thou shalt do!
Only be sure thy daily life,
In its peace or in its strife,
Never shall be unobserved;
 We pursue thy whole career,
 And hope for it, or doubt, or fear, —
Lo, hast thou kept thy path or swerved,

We are beside thee in all thy ways,
With our blame, with our praise,
Our shame to feel, our pride to show,
Glad, angry — but indifferent, no!
Whether it be the lot to go,
For the good of us all, where the haters meet
In the crowded city's horrible street;
Or thou step alone through the morass
Where never sound yet was
Save the dry quick clap of the stork's bill,
For the air is still, and the water still,
When the blue breast of the dipping coot
Dives under, and all is mute.
So, at the last shall come old age,
Decrepit as befits that stage;
How else wouldst thou retire apart
With the hoarded memories of thy heart,
And gather all to the very least
Of the fragments of life's earlier feast,
Let fall through eagerness to find
The crowning dainties yet behind?
Ponder on the entire past
Laid together thus at last,
When the twilight helps to fuse
The first fresh with the faded hues,
And the outline of the whole,
As round eve's shades their framework roll,
Grandly fronts for once thy soul.
And then as, 'mid the dark, a gleam
 Of yet another morning breaks,
And like the hand which ends a dream,
Death, with the might of his sunbeam,
 Touches the flesh and the soul awakes,
Then ——"
Ay, then indeed something would happen!

But what? For here her voice changed like a bird's;
There grew more of the music and less of the words;
Had Jacynth only been by me to clap pen
To paper and put you down every syllable
With those clever clerkly fingers,
All I 've forgotten as well as what lingers
In this old brain of mine that 's but ill able
To give you even this poor version
Of the speech I spoil, as it were, with stammering
— More fault of those who had the hammering
Of prosody into me and syntax,
And did it, not with hobnails but tintacks!
But to return from this excursion, —
Just, do you mark, when the song was sweetest,
The peace most deep and the charm completest,
There came, shall I say, a snap —
And the charm vanished!
And my sense returned, so strangely banished,
And, starting as from a nap,
I knew the crone was bewitching my lady,
With Jacynth asleep; and but one spring made I
Down from the casement, round to the portal,
Another minute and I had entered, —
When the door opened, and more than mortal
Stood, with a face where to my mind centred
All beauties I ever saw or shall see,
The Duchess: I stopped as if struck by palsy.
She was so different, happy and beautiful,
I felt at once that all was best,
And that I had nothing to do, for the rest,
But wait her commands, obey and be dutiful.
Not that, in fact, there was any commanding;
I saw the glory of her eye,
And the brow's height and the breast's expanding,
And I was hers to live or to die.

As for finding what she wanted,
You know God Almighty granted
Such little signs should serve wild creatures
 To tell one another all their desires,
 So that each knows what his friend requires,
And does its bidding without teachers.
I preceded her; the crone
Followed silent and alone;
I spoke to her, but she merely jabbered
 In the old style; both her eyes had slunk
 Back to their pits; her stature shrunk;
 In short, the soul in its body sunk
Like a blade sent home to its scabbard.
We descended, I preceding;
Crossed the court with nobody heeding;
All the world was at the chase,
The courtyard like a desert-place,
The stable emptied of its small fry;
I saddled myself the very palfrey
I remember patting while it carried her,
The day she arrived and the Duke married her,
And, do you know, though it 's easy deceiving
Oneself in such matters, I can't help believing
The lady had not forgotten it either,
And knew the poor devil so much beneath her
Would have been only too glad for her service
To dance on hot ploughshares like a Turk dervise,
But, unable to pay proper duty where owing it,
Was reduced to that pitiful method of showing it:
For though the moment I began setting
His saddle on my own nag of Berold's begetting,
(Not that I meant to be obtrusive)
 She stopped me, while his rug was shifting,
 By a single rapid finger's lifting,
And, with a gesture kind but conclusive,

And a little shake of the head, refused me, —
I say, although she never used me,
Yet when she was mounted, the Gipsy behind her,
And I ventured to remind her,
I suppose with a voice of less steadiness
Than usual, for my feeling exceeded me,
— Something to the effect that I was in readiness
Whenever God should please she needed me, —
Then, do you know, her face looked down on me
With a look that placed a crown on me,
And she felt in her bosom, — mark, her bosom —
And, as a flower-tree drops its blossom,
Dropped me . . . ah, had it been a purse
Of silver, my friend, or gold that 's worse,
Why, you see, as soon as I found myself
So understood, — that a true heart so may gain
Such a reward, — I should have gone home again,
Kissed Jacynth, and soberly drowned myself!
It was a little plait of hair
Such as friends in a convent make
To wear, each for the other's sake, —
This, see, which at my breast I wear,
Ever did (rather to Jacynth's grudgment),
And ever shall, till the Day of Judgment.
And then, — and then, — to cut short, — this is idle,
These are feelings it is not good to foster, —
I pushed the gate wide, she shook the bridle,
And the palfrey bounded, — and so we lost her.

XVI

When the liquor 's out why clink the cannikin?
I did think to describe you the panic in
The redoubtable breast of our master the mannikin,
And what was the pitch of his mother's yellowness,
How she turned as a shark to snap the spare-rib

Clean off, sailors say, from a pearl-diving Carib,
When she heard, what she called the flight of the feloness
— But it seems such child's play,
What they said and did with the lady away!
And to dance on, when we 've lost the music,
Always made me — and no doubt makes you — sick.
Nay, to my mind, the world's face looked so stern
As that sweet form disappeared through the postern,
She that kept it in constant good humor,
It ought to have stopped; there seemed nothing to do more.
But the world thought otherwise and went on,
And my head 's one that its spite was spent on:
Thirty years are fled since that morning,
And with them all my head's adorning.
Nor did the old Duchess die outright,
As you expect, of suppressed spite,
The natural end of every adder
Not suffered to empty its poison-bladder:
But she and her son agreed, I take it,
That no one should touch on the story to wake it,
For the wound in the Duke's pride rankled fiery,
So, they made no search and small inquiry —
And when fresh Gipsies have paid us a visit, I 've
Noticed the couple were never inquisitive,
But told them they 're folks the Duke don't want here,
And bade them make haste and cross the frontier.
Brief, the Duchess was gone and the Duke was glad of it,
And the old one was in the young one's stead,
And took, in her place, the household's head,
And a blessed time the household had of it!
And were I not, as a man may say, cautious

How I trench, more than needs, on the nauseous,
I could favor you with sundry touches
Of the paint-smutches with which the Duchess
Heightened the mellowness of her cheek's yellowness
(To get on faster) until at last her
Cheek grew to be one master-plaster
Of mucus and fucus from mere use of ceruse:
In short, she grew from scalp to udder
Just the object to make you shudder.

XVII

You 're my friend —
What a thing friendship is, world without end!
How it gives the heart and soul a stir-up
As if somebody broached you a glorious runlet,
And poured out, all lovelily, sparklingly, sunlit,
Our green Moldavia, the streaky syrup,
Cotnar as old as the time of the Druids —
Friendship may match with that monarch of fluids;
Each supplies a dry brain, fills you its ins-and-outs,
Gives your life's hour-glass a shake when the thin sand doubts
Whether to run on or stop short, and guarantees
Age is not all made of stark sloth and arrant ease.
I have seen my little lady once more,
Jacynth, the Gipsy, Berold, and the rest of it,
For to me spoke the Duke, as I told you before;
I always wanted to make a clean breast of it:
And now it is made — why, my heart's blood, that went trickle,
Trickle, but anon, in such muddy driblets,
Is pumped up brisk now, through the main ventricle,
And genially floats me about the giblets.
I 'll tell you what I intend to do:
I must see this fellow his sad life through —

He is our Duke, after all,
And I, as he says, but a serf and thrall.
My father was born here, and I inherit
His fame, a chain he bound his son with;
Could I pay in a lump I should prefer it,
But there 's no mine to blow up and get done with:
So, I must stay till the end of the chapter.
For, as to our middle-age-manners-adapter,
Be it a thing to be glad on or sorry on,
Some day or other, his head in a morion
And breast in a hauberk, his heels he 'll kick up,
Slain by an onslaught fierce of hiccup.
And then, when red doth the sword of our Duke rust,
And its leathern sheath lie o'ergrown with a blue crust,
Then I shall scrape together my earnings;
For, you see, in the churchyard Jacynth reposes,
And our children all went the way of the roses:
It 's a long lane that knows no turnings.
One needs but little tackle to travel in;
So, just one stout cloak shall I indue;
And for a staff, what beats the javelin
With which his boars my father pinned you?
And then, for a purpose you shall hear presently,
Taking some Cotnar, a tight plump skinful,
I shall go journeying, who but I, pleasantly!
Sorrow is vain and despondency sinful.
What 's a man's age? He must hurry more, that 's all;
Cram in a day, what his youth took a year to hold:
When we mind labor, then only, we 're too old —
What age had Methusalem when he begat Saul?
And at last, as its haven some buffeted ship sees,
(Come all the way from the north-parts with sperm oil)
I hope to get safely out of the turmoil

And arrive one day at the land of the Gipsies,
And find my lady, or hear the last news of her
From some old thief and son of Lucifer,
His forehead chapleted green with wreathy hop,
Sunburned all over like an Æthiop.
And when my Cotnar begins to operate
And the tongue of the rogue to run at a proper rate,
And our wine-skin, tight once, shows each flaccid dent,
I shall drop in with — as if by accident —
"You never knew, then, how it all ended,
What fortune good or bad attended
The little lady your Queen befriended?"
— And when that 's told me, what 's remaining?
This world 's too hard for my explaining.
The same wise judge of matters equine
Who still preferred some slim four-year-old
To the big-boned stock of mighty Berold,
And, for strong Cotnar, drank French weak wine,
He also must be such a lady's scorner!
Smooth Jacob still robs homely Esau:
Now up, now down, the world 's one see-saw.
— So, I shall find out some snug corner
Under a hedge, like Orson the wood-knight,
Turn myself round and bid the world good-night;
And sleep a sound sleep till the trumpet's blowing
Wakes me (unless priests cheat us laymen)
To a world where will be no further throwing
Pearls before swine that can't value them. Amen!

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL

SHORTLY AFTER THE REVIVAL OF LEARNING IN EUROPE

1855

LET us begin and carry up this corpse,
Singing together.
Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar thorpes
Each in its tether
Sleeping safe on the bosom of the plain,
Cared-for till cock-crow:
Look out if yonder be not day again
Rimming the rock-row!
That 's the appropriate country; there, man's thought,
Rarer, intenser,
Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,
Chafes in the censer.
Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and crop;
Seek we sepulture
On a tall mountain, citied to the top,
Crowded with culture!
All the peaks soar, but one the rest excels;
Clouds overcome it;
No! yonder sparkle is the citadel's
Circling its summit.
Thither our path lies; wind we up the heights:
Wait ye the warning?
Our low life was the level's and the night's;
He 's for the morning.
Step to a tune, square chests, erect each head,
'Ware the beholders!
This is our master, famous calm and dead,
Borne on our shoulders.

Sleep, crop and herd! sleep, darkling thorpe and croft,
Safe from the weather!
He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,
Singing together,
He was a man born with thy face and throat,
Lyric Apollo!
Long he lived nameless: how should spring take note
Winter would follow?
Till lo, the little touch, and youth was gone!
Cramped and diminished,
Moaned he, "New measures, other feet anon!
My dance is finished?"
No, that 's the world's way: (keep the mountain-side,
Made for the city!)
He knew the signal, and stepped on with pride
Over men's pity;
Left play for work, and grappled with the world
Bent on escaping:
"What 's in the scroll," quoth he, "thou keepest furled?
Show me their shaping,
Theirs who most studied man, the bard and sage, —
Give!" — So, he gowned him,
Straight got by heart that book to its last page:
Learned, we found him.
Yea, but we found him bald too, eyes like lead,
Accents uncertain:
"Time to taste life," another would have said,
"Up with the curtain!"
This man said rather, "Actual life comes next?
Patience a moment!
Grant I have mastered learning's crabbed text,
Still there 's the comment.

Let me know all! Prate not of most or least,
Painful or easy!
Even to the crumbs I 'd fain eat up the feast,
Ay, nor feel queasy."
Oh, such a life as he resolved to live,
When he had learned it,
When he had gathered all books had to give!
Sooner he spurned it.
Image the whole, then execute the parts —
Fancy the fabric
Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire from quartz,
Ere mortar dab brick!

(Here 's the town-gate reached: there 's the market-place
Gaping before us.)
Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace
(Hearten our chorus!)
That before living he 'd learn how to live —
No end to learning:
Earn the means first — God surely will contrive
Use for our earning.
Others mistrust and say, "But time escapes:
Live now or never!"
He said, "What 's time? Leave Now for dogs and apes!
Man has Forever."
Back to his book then: deeper drooped his head:
Calculus racked him:
Leaden before, his eyes grew dross of lead:
Tussis attacked him.
"Now, master, take a little rest!" — not he!
(Caution redoubled,
Step two abreast, the way winds narrowly!)
Not a whit troubled

Back to his studies, fresher than at first,
Fierce as a dragon
He (soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst)
Sucked at the flagon.
Oh, if we draw a circle premature,
Heedless of far gain,
Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure
Bad is our bargain!
Was it not great? did not he throw on God,
(He loves the burthen) —
God's task to make the heavenly period
Perfect the earthen?
Did not he magnify the mind, show clear
Just what it all meant?
He would not discount life, as fools do here,
Paid by instalment.
He ventured neck or nothing — heaven's success
Found, or earth's failure:
"Wilt thou trust death or not?" He answered "Yes:
Hence with life's pale lure!"
That low man seeks a little thing to do,
Sees it and does it:
This high man, with a great thing to pursue,
Dies ere he knows it.
That low man goes on adding one to one,
His hundred 's soon hit:
This high man, aiming at a million,
Misses an unit.
That, has the world here — should he need the next,
Let the world mind him!
This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed
Seeking shall find him.
So, with the throttling hands of death at strife,
Ground he at grammar;

Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech were rife:
While he could stammer
He settled *Hoti's* business — let it be! —
Properly based *Oun* —
Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*,
Dead from the waist down.
Well, here 's the platform, here 's the proper place:
Hail to your purlieus,
All ye highfliers of the feathered race,
Swallows and curlews!
Here 's the top-peak; the multitude below
Live, for they can, there:
This man decided not to Live but Know —
Bury this man there?
Here — here 's his place, where meteors shoot, clouds form,
Lightnings are loosened,
Stars come and go! Let joy break with the storm,
Peace let the dew send!
Lofty designs must close in like effects:
Loftily lying,
Leave him — still loftier than the world suspects,
Living and dying.

THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY

A MIDDLE-AGE INTERLUDE

1855

ROSA MUNDI; SEU, FULCITE ME FLORIBUS. A CONCEIT OF MASTER GYSBRECHT, CANON-REGULAR OF SAINT JODOCUS-BY-THE-BAR, YPRES CITY. CANTUQUE, *Virgilius*. AND HATH OFTEN BEEN SUNG AT HOCK-TIDE AND FESTIVALS. GAVISUS ERAM, *Jessides*.

(It would seem to be a glimpse from the burning of Jacques du Bourg-Molay, at Paris, A. D. 1314; as distorted by the refraction from Flemish brain to brain, during the course of a couple of centuries.)

[Molay was Grand Master of the Templars when that order was suppressed in 1312.]

I

PREADMONISHETH THE ABBOT DEODAET

THE Lord, we look to once for all,
 Is the Lord we should look at, all at once:
He knows not to vary, saith Saint Paul,
 Nor the shadow of turning, for the nonce.
See him no other than as he is!
 Give both the infinitudes their due —
Infinite mercy, but, I wis,
 As infinite a justice too.
[*Organ: plagal-cadence.*
 As infinite a justice too.

II

ONE SINGETH

John, Master of the Temple of God,
 Falling to sin the Unknown Sin,
What he bought of Emperor Aldabrod,
 He sold it to Sultan Saladin:
Till, caught by Pope Clement, a-buzzing there,
 Hornet-prince of the mad wasps' hive,
And clipt of his wings in Paris square,
 They bring him now to be burned alive.
 [*And wanteth there grace of lute or clavicithern,*
 ye shall say to confirm him who singeth —
 We bring John now to be burned alive.

III

In the midst is a goodly gallows built;
 'Twixt fork and fork, a stake is stuck;
But first they set divers tumbrils a-tilt,
 Make a trench all round with the city muck;
Inside they pile log upon log, good store;
 Faggots no few, blocks great and small,
Reach a man's mid-thigh, no less, no more, —
 For they mean he should roast in the sight of all.

CHORUS

We mean he should roast in the sight of all.

IV

Good sappy bavins that kindle forthwith;
 Billets that blaze substantial and slow;
Pine-stump split deftly, dry as pith;
 Larch-heart that chars to a chalk-white glow:

Then up they hoist me John in a chafe,
 Sling him fast like a hog to scorch,
Spit in his face, then leap back safe,
 Sing "Laudes" and bid clap-to the torch.

CHORUS

Laus Deo — who bids clap-to the torch.

V

John of the Temple, whose fame so bragged,
 Is burning alive in Paris square!
How can he curse, if his mouth is gagged?
 Or wriggle his neck, with a collar there?
Or heave his chest, which a band goes round?
 Or threat with his fist, since his arms are spliced?
Or kick with his feet, now his legs are bound?
 — Thinks John, I will call upon Jesus Christ.
[*Here one crosseth himself.*

VI

Jesus Christ — John had bought and sold,
 Jesus Christ — John had eaten and drunk;
To him, the Flesh meant silver and gold.
 (*Salvâ reverentiâ.*)
Now it was, "Saviour, bountiful lamb,
 I have roasted thee Turks, though men roast me!
See thy servant, the plight wherein I am!
 Art thou a saviour? Save thou me!"

CHORUS

'T is John the mocker cries, "Save thou me!'

VII

Who maketh God's menace an idle word?
— Saith, it no more means what it proclaims,
Than a damsel's threat to her wanton bird? —
For she too prattles of ugly names.
— Saith, he knoweth but one thing, — what he knows?
That God is good and the rest is breath;
Why else is the same styled Sharon's rose?
Once a rose, ever a rose, he saith.

CHORUS

O, John shall yet find a rose, he saith!

VIII

Alack, there be roses and roses, John!
Some, honied of taste like your leman's tongue:
Some, bitter; for why? (roast gayly on!)
Their tree struck root in devil's-dung.
When Paul once reasoned of righteousness
And of temperance and of judgment to come,
Good Felix trembled, he could no less:
John, snickering, crook'd his wicked thumb.

CHORUS

What cometh to John of the wicked thumb?

IX

Ha ha, John plucketh now at his rose
To rid himself of a sorrow at heart!
Lo, — petal on petal, fierce rays unclose;
Anther on anther, sharp spikes outstart;

And with blood for dew, the bosom boils;
 And a gust of sulphur is all its smell;
And lo, he is horribly in the toils
 Of a coal-black giant flower of hell!

CHORUS

What maketh heaven, That maketh hell.

X

So, as John called now, through the fire amain,
 On the Name, he had cursed with, all his life —
To the Person, he bought and sold again —
 For the Face, with his daily buffets rife —
Feature by feature It took its place:
 And his voice, like a mad dog's choking bark,
At the steady whole of the Judge's face —
 Died. Forth John's soul flared into the dark.

SUBJOINETH THE ABBOT DEODAET

God help all poor souls lost in the dark!

HOLY-CROSS DAY

ON WHICH THE JEWS WERE FORCED TO ATTEND AN ANNUAL CHRISTIAN SERMON IN ROME

1855

["Now was come about Holy-Cross Day, and now must my lord preach his first sermon to the Jews: as it was of old cared for in the merciful bowels of the Church, that, so to speak, a crumb at least from her conspicuous table here in Rome should be, though but once yearly, cast to the famishing dogs, under-trampled

and bespitten-upon beneath the feet of the guests. And a moving sight in truth, this, of so many of the besotted blind restif and ready-to-perish Hebrews! now maternally brought — nay (for He saith, 'Compel them to come in') haled, as it were, by the head and hair, and against their obstinate hearts, to partake of the heavenly grace. What awakening, what striving with tears, what working of a yeasty conscience! Nor was my lord wanting to himself on so apt an occasion; witness the abundance of conversions which did incontinently reward him: though not to my lord be altogether the glory." — *Diary by the Bishop's Secretary*, 1600.]

What the Jews really said, on thus being driven to church, was rather to this effect: —

I

FEE, faw, fum! bubble and squeak!
Blessedest Thursday 's the fat of the week.
Rumble and tumble, sleek and rough,
Stinking and savory, smug and gruff,
Take the church-road, for the bell's due chime
Gives us the summons — 't is sermon-time!

II

Boh, here 's Barnabas! Job, that 's you?
Up stumps Solomon — bustling too?
Shame, man! greedy beyond your years
To handsel the bishop's shaving-shears?
Fair play 's a jewel! Leave friends in the lurch?
Stand on a line ere you start for the church!

III

Higgledy piggledy, packed we lie,
Rats in a hamper, swine in a stye,
Wasps in a bottle, frogs in a sieve,

Worms in a carcase, fleas in a sleeve.
Hist! square shoulders, settle your thumbs
And buzz for the bishop — here he comes.

IV

Bow, wow, wow — a bone for the dog!
I liken his Grace to an acorned hog.
What, a boy at his side, with the bloom of a lass,
To help and handle my lord's hour-glass!
Didst ever behold so lithe a chine?
His cheek hath laps like a fresh-singed swine.

V

Aaron's asleep — shove hip to haunch,
Or somebody deal him a dig in the paunch!
Look at the purse with the tassel and knob,
And the gown with the angel and thingumbob!
What 's he at, quotha? reading his text!
Now you 've his curtsey — and what comes next?

VI

See to our converts — you doomed black dozen —
No stealing away — nor cog nor cozen!
You five, that were thieves, deserve it fairly;
You seven, that were beggars, will live less sparely;
You took your turn and dipped in the hat,
Got fortune — and fortune gets you; mind that!

VII

Give your first groan — compunction 's at work;
And soft! from a Jew you mount to a Turk.
Lo, Micah, — the selfsame beard on chin
He was four times already converted in!
Here 's a knife, clip quick — it 's a sign of grace —
Or he ruins us all with his hanging-face.

VIEW ACROSS THE GHETTO, FROM CENCI PALACE, ROME

(From a photograph by W. Hall Griffin)



VIII

Whom now is the bishop a-leering at?
I know a point where his text falls pat.
I 'll tell him to-morrow, a word just now
Went to my heart and made me vow
I meddle no more with the worst of trades —
Let somebody else pay his serenades.

IX

Groan all together now, whee — hee — hee!
It 's a-work, it 's a-work, ah, woe is me!
It began, when a herd of us, picked and placed,
Were spurred through the Corso, stripped to the waist;
Jew brutes with sweat and blood well spent
To usher in worthily Christian Lent.

X

It grew, when the hangman entered our bounds,
Yelled, pricked us out to his church like hounds:
It got to a pitch, when the hand indeed
Which gutted my purse would throttle my creed:
And it overflows when, to even the odd,
Men I helped to their sins help me to their God.

XI

But now, while the scapegoats leave our flock,
And the rest sit silent and count the clock,
Since forced to muse the appointed time
On these precious facts and truths sublime, —
Let us fitly employ it, under our breath,
In saying Ben Ezra's Song of Death.

XII

For Rabbi Ben Ezra, the night he died,
Called sons and sons' sons to his side,
And spoke, "This world has been harsh and strange;
Something is wrong: there needeth a change.
But what, or where? at the last or first?
In one point only we sinned, at worst.

XIII

"The Lord will have mercy on Jacob yet,
And again in his border see Israel set.
When Judah beholds Jerusalem,
The stranger-seed shall be joined to them:
To Jacob's House shall the Gentiles cleave.
So the Prophet saith and his sons believe.

XIV

"Ay, the children of the chosen race
Shall carry and bring them to their place:
In the land of the Lord shall lead the same,
Bondsmen and handmaids. Who shall blame,
When the slaves enslave, the oppressed ones o'er
The oppressor triumph for evermore?

XV

"God spoke, and gave us the word to keep,
Bade never fold the hands nor sleep
'Mid a faithless world, — at watch and ward,
Till Christ at the end relieve our guard.
By His servant Moses the watch was set:
Though near upon cock-crow, we keep it yet.

XVI

"Thou! if thou wast He, who at mid-watch came,
By the starlight, naming a dubious name!
And if, too heavy with sleep — too rash
With fear — O Thou, if that martyr-gash
Fell on Thee coming to take thine own,
And we gave the Cross, when we owed the Throne —

XVII

"Thou art the Judge. We are bruised thus.
But, the Judgment over, join sides with us!
Thine too is the cause! and not more thine
Than ours, is the work of these dogs and swine,
Whose life laughs through and spits at their creed!
Who maintain Thee in word, and defy Thee in deed!

XVIII

"We withstood Christ then? Be mindful how
At least we withstand Barabbas now!
Was our outrage sore? But the worst we spared,
To have called these — Christians, had we dared!
Let defiance to them pay mistrust of Thee,
And Rome make amends for Calvary!

XIX

"By the torture, prolonged from age to age,
By the infamy, Israel's heritage,
By the Ghetto's plague, by the garb's disgrace,
By the badge of shame, by the felon's place,
By the branding-tool, the bloody whip,
And the summons to Christian fellowship, —

XX

"We boast our proof that at least the Jew
Would wrest Christ's name from the Devil's crew.
Thy face took never so deep a shade
But we fought them in it, God our aid!
A trophy to bear, as we march, thy band,
South, East, and on to the Pleasant Land!"

[*Pope Gregory XVI. abolished this bad business of the Sermon.* — R. B.]

PROTUS

1855

Among these latter busts we count by scores,
Half-emperors and quarter-emperors,
Each with his bay-leaf fillet, loose-thonged vest,
Loric and low-browed Gorgon on the breast, —
One loves a baby face, with violets there,
Violets instead of laurel in the hair,
As those were all the little locks could bear.

Now read here. "Protus ends a period
Of empery beginning with a god;
Born in porphyry chamber at Byzant,
Queens by his cradle, proud and ministrant:
And if he quickened breath there, 't would like fire
Pantingly through the dim vast realm transpire.
A fame that he was missing spread afar:
The world from its four corners, rose in war,
Till he was borne out on a balcony
To pacify the world when it should see.

The captains ranged before him, one, his hand
Made baby points at, gained the chief command.
And day by day more beautiful he grew
In shape, all said, in feature and in hue,
While young Greek sculptors, gazing on the child,
Became with old Greek sculpture reconciled.
Already sages labored to condense
In easy tomes a life's experience:
And artists took grave counsel to impart
In one breath and one hand-sweep, all their art —
To make his graces prompt as blossoming
Of plentifully-watered palms in spring:
Since well beseems it, whoso mounts the throne,
For beauty, knowledge, strength, should stand alone,
And mortals love the letters of his name."

— Stop! Have you turned two pages? Still the same.
New reign, same date. The scribe goes on to say
How that same year, on such a month and day,
"John the Pannonian, groundedly believed
A blacksmith's bastard, whose hard hand reprieved
The Empire from its fate the year before, —
Came, had a mind to take the crown, and wore
The same for six years (during which the Huns
Kept off their fingers from us), till his sons
Put something in his liquor" — and so forth.
Then a new reign. Stay — "Take at its just worth"
(Subjoins an annotator) "what I give
As hearsay. Some think, John let Protus live
And slip away. 'T is said, he reached man's age
At some blind northern court; made, first a page,
Then tutor to the children; last, of use
About the hunting-stables. I deduce
He wrote the little tract 'On worming dogs,'

Whereof the name in sundry catalogues
Is extant yet. A Protus of the race
Is rumored to have died a monk in Thrace, —
And if the same, he reached senility."

Here 's John the Smith's rough-hammered head.
Great eye,
Gross jaw and griped lips do what granite can
To give you the crown-grasper. What a man!

THE STATUE AND THE BUST

1855

THERE 's a palace in Florence, the world knows well,
And a statue watches it from the square,
And this story of both do our townsmen tell.

Ages ago, a lady there,
At the farthest window facing the East
Asked, "Who rides by with the royal air?"

The bridesmaids' prattle around her ceased;
She leaned forth, one on either hand;
They saw how the blush of the bride increased —

They felt by its beats her heart expand —
As one at each ear and both in a breath
Whispered, "The Great-Duke Ferdinand."

That selfsame instant, underneath,
The Duke rode past in his idle way,
Empty and fine like a swordless sheath.

Gay he rode, with a friend as gay,
Till he threw his head back — "Who is she?"
— "A bride the Riccardi brings home to-day."

Hair in heaps lay heavily
Over a pale brow spirit-pure —
Carved like the heart of a coal-black tree,

Crisped like a war-steed's encolure —
And vainly sought to dissemble her eyes
Of the blackest black our eyes endure.

And lo, a blade for a knight's emprise
Filled the fine empty sheath of a man, —
The Duke grew straightway brave and wise.

He looked at her, as a lover can;
She looked at him, as one who awakes:
The past was a sleep, and her life began.

Now, love so ordered for both their sakes,
A feast was held that selfsame night
In the pile which the mighty shadow makes.

(For Via Larga is three-parts light,
But the palace overshadows one,
Because of a crime which may God requite!

To Florence and God the wrong was done,
Through the first republic's murder there
By Casimo and his cursed son.)

The Duke (with the statue's face in the square)
Turned in the midst of his multitude
At the bright approach of the bridal pair.

Face to face the lovers stood
A single minute and no more,
While the bridegroom bent as a man subdued —

Bowed till his bonnet brushed the floor —
For the Duke on the lady a kiss conferred,
As the courtly custom was of yore.

In a minute can lovers exchange a word?
If a word did pass, which I do not think,
Only one out of the thousand heard.

That was the bridegroom. At day's brink
He and his bride were alone at last
In a bedchamber by a taper's blink.

Calmly he said that her lot was cast,
That the door she had passed was shut on her
Till the final catafalk repassed.

The world meanwhile, its noise and stir,
Through a certain window facing the East,
She could watch like a convent's chronicler.

Since passing the door might lead to a feast,
And a feast might lead to so much beside,
He, of many evils, chose the least.

"Freely I choose too," said the bride —
"Your window and its world suffice,"
Replied the tongue, while the heart replied —

"If I spend the night with that devil twice,
May his window serve as my loop of hell
Whence a damned soul looks on paradise!

"I fly to the Duke who loves me well,
Sit by his side and laugh at sorrow
Ere I count another ave-bell.

"'T is only the coat of a page to borrow,
And tie my hair in a horse-boy's trim,
And I save my soul — but not to-morrow" —

(She checked herself and her eye grew dim)
"My father tarries to bless my state:
I must keep it one day more for him.

"Is one day more so long to wait?
Moreover the Duke rides past, I know;
We shall see each other, sure as fate."

She turned on her side and slept. Just so!
So we resolve on a thing and sleep:
So did the lady, ages ago.

That night the Duke said, "Dear or cheap
As the cost of this cup of bliss may prove
To body or soul, I will drain it deep."

And on the morrow, bold with love,
He beckoned the bridegroom (close on call,
As his duty bade, by the Duke's alcove)

And smiled "'T was a very funeral,
Your lady will think, this feast of ours,
A shame to efface, whate'er befall!

"What if we break from the Arno bowers,
And try if Petraja, cool and green,
Cure last night's fault with this morning's flowers?"

The bridegroom, not a thought to be seen
On his steady brow and quiet mouth,
Said, "Too much favor for me so mean!

"But, alas! my lady leaves the South;
Each wind that comes from the Apennine
Is a menace to her tender youth:

"Nor a way exists, the wise opine,
If she quits her palace twice this year,
To avert the flower of life's decline."

Quoth the Duke, "A sage and a kindly fear.
Moreover Petraja is cold this spring:
Be our feast to-night as usual here!"

And then to himself — "Which night shall bring
Thy bride to her lover's embraces, fool —
Or I am the fool, and thou art the king!

"Yet my passion must wait a night, nor cool —
For to-night the Envoy arrives from France
Whose heart I unlock with thyself, my tool.

"I need thee still and might miss perchance.
To-day is not wholly lost, beside,
With its hope of my lady's countenance:

"For I ride — what should I do but ride?
And passing her palace, if I list,
May glance at its window — well betide!"

So said, so done: nor the lady missed
One ray that broke from the ardent brow,
Nor a curl of the lips where the spirit kissed.

Be sure that each renewed the vow,
No morrow's sun should arise and set
And leave them then as it left them now.

But next day passed, and next day yet,
With still fresh cause to wait one day more
Ere each leaped over the parapet.

And still, as love's brief morning wore,
With a gentle start, half smile, half sigh,
They found love not as it seemed before.

They thought it would work infallibly,
But not in despite of heaven and earth:
The rose would blow when the storm passed by.

Meantime they could profit in winter's dearth
By store of fruits that supplant the rose:
The world and its ways have a certain worth:

And to press a point while these oppose
Were simply policy; better wait:
We lose no friends and we gain no foes.

Meantime, worse fates than a lover's fate,
Who daily may ride and pass and look
Where his lady watches behind the grate!

And she — she watched the square like a book
Holding one picture and only one,
Which daily to find she undertook:

When the picture was reached the book was done,
And she turned from the picture at night to scheme
Of tearing it out for herself next sun.

So weeks grew months, years; gleam by gleam
The glory dropped from their youth and love,
And both perceived they had dreamed a dream;

Which hovered as dreams do, still above:
But who can take a dream for a truth?
Oh, hide our eyes from the next remove!

One day as the lady saw her youth
Depart, and the silver thread that streaked
Her hair, and worn by the serpent's tooth,

The brow so puckered, the chin so peaked, —
And wondered who the woman was,
Hollow-eyed and haggard-cheeked,

Fronting her silent in the glass —
"Summon here," she suddenly said,
"Before the rest of my old self pass,

"Him, the Carver, a hand to aid,
Who fashions the clay no love will change,
And fixes a beauty never to fade.

"Let Robbia's craft so apt and strange
Arrest the remains of young and fair,
And rivet them while the seasons range.

"Make me a face on the window there,
Waiting as ever, mute the while,
My love to pass below in the square!

"And let me think that it may beguile
Dreary days which the dead must spend
Down in their darkness under the aisle,

"To say, 'What matters it at the end?
I did no more while my heart was warm
Than does that image, my pale-faced friend.'

"Where is the use of the lip's red charm,
The heaven of hair, the pride of the brow,
And the blood that blues the inside arm —

"Unless we turn, as the soul knows how,
The earthly gift to an end divine?
A lady of clay is as good, I trow."

But long ere Robbia's cornice, fine,
With flowers and fruits which leaves enlace,
Was set where now is the empty shrine —

(And, leaning out of a bright blue space,
As a ghost might lean from a chink of sky,
The passionate pale lady's face —

Eyeing ever, with earnest eye
And quick-turned neck at its breathless stretch,
Some one who ever is passing by —)

The Duke had sighed like the simplest wretch
In Florence, "Youth — my dream escapes!
Will its record stay?" And he bade them fetch

Some subtle moulder of brazen shapes —
"Can the soul, the will, die out of a man
Ere his body find the grave that gapes?

"John of Douay shall effect my plan,
Set me on horseback here aloft,
Alive, as the crafty sculptor can,

"In the very square I have crossed so oft:
That men may admire, when future suns
Shall touch the eyes to a purpose soft,

"While the mouth and the brow stay brave in bronze —
Admire and say, 'When he was alive
How he would take his pleasure once!'

"And it shall go hard but I contrive
To listen the while, and laugh in my tomb
At idleness which aspires to strive."

So! While these wait the trump of doom,
How do their spirits pass, I wonder,
Nights and days in the narrow room?

Still, I suppose, they sit and ponder
What a gift life was, ages ago,
Six steps out of the chapel yonder.

Only they see not God, I know,
Nor all that chivalry of his,
The soldier-saints who, row on row,

Burn upward each to his point of bliss —
Since, the end of life being manifest,
He had burned his way thro' the world to this.

I hear you reproach, "But delay was best,
For their end was a crime." — Oh, a crime will do
As well, I reply, to serve for a test,

As a virtue golden through and through,
Sufficient to vindicate itself
And prove its worth at a moment's view!

Must a game be played for the sake of pelf?
Where a button goes, 't were an epigram
To offer the stamp of the very Guelph.

The true has no value beyond the sham:
As well the counter as coin, I submit,
When your table 's a hat, and your prize a dram.

Stake your counter as boldly every whit,
Venture as warily, use the same skill,
Do your best, whether winning or losing it,

If you choose to play! — is my principle.
Let a man contend to the uttermost
For his life's set prize, be it what it will!

The counter our lovers staked was lost
As surely as if it were lawful coin:
And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost

Is — the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,
Though the end in sight was a vice, I say.
You of the virtue (we issue join)
How strive you? *De te, fabula!*

PORPHYRIA'S LOVER

1842

The rain set early in to-night,
The sullen wind was soon awake,
It tore the elm-tops down for spite,
And did its worst to vex the lake:
I listened with heart fit to break.
When glided in Porphyria; straight
She shut the cold out and the storm,
And kneeled and made the cheerless grate
Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;
Which done, she rose, and from her form
Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,
And laid her soiled gloves by, united
Her hat and let the damp hair fall,
And, last, she sat down by my side
And called me. When no voice replied,
She put my arm about her waist,
And made her smooth white shoulder bare,
And all her yellow hair displaced,
And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,
And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair,
Murmuring how she loved me — she
Too weak, for all her heart's endeavor,
To set its struggling passion free
From pride, and vainer ties dissever,
And give herself to me forever.
But passion sometimes would prevail,
Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain
A sudden thought of one so pale
For love of her, and all in vain:
So, she was come through wind and rain.

Be sure I looked up at her eyes
Happy and proud; at last I knew
Porphyria worshipped me; surprise
Made my heart swell, and still it grew
While I debated what to do.
That moment she was mine, mine, fair,
Perfectly pure and good: I found
A thing to do, and all her hair
In one long yellow string I wound
Three times her little throat around,
And strangled her. No pain felt she;
I am quite sure she felt no pain.
As a shut bud that holds a bee,
I warily oped her lids: again
Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.
And I untightened next the tress
About her neck; her cheek once more
Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:
I propped her head up as before,
Only, this time my shoulder bore
Her head, which droops upon it still:
The smiling rosy little head,
So glad it has its utmost will,
That all it scorned at once is fled,
And I, its love, am gained instead!
Porphyria's love: she guessed not how
Her darling one wish would be heard.
And thus we sit together now,
And all night long we have not stirred,
And yet God has not said a word!

"CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK TOWER CAME"

(*See Edgar's song in* "LEAR.")

1855

I

My first thought was, he lied in every word,
That hoary cripple, with malicious eye
Askance to watch the working of his lie
On mine, and mouth scarce able to afford
Suppression of the glee, that pursed and scored
Its edge, one more victim gained thereby.

II

What else should he be set for, with his staff?
What, save to waylay with his lies, ensnare
All travellers who might find him posted there,
And ask the road? I guessed what skull-like laugh
Would break, what crutch 'gin write my epitaph
For pastime in the dusty thoroughfare,

III

If at his counsel I should turn aside
Into that ominous tract which, all agree,
Hides the Dark Tower. Yet acquiescingly
I did turn as he pointed: neither pride
Nor hope rekindling at the end descried,
So much as gladness that some end might be.

IV

For, what with my whole world-wide wandering,
What with my search drawn out thro' years, my hope
Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope

With that obstreperous joy success would bring,
I hardly tried now to rebuke the spring
My heart made, finding failure in its scope.

V

As when a sick man very near to death
Seems dead indeed, and feels begin and end
The tears and takes the farewell of each friend,
And hears one bid the other go, draw breath
Freelier outside, ("since all is o'er," he saith,
"And the blow fallen no grieving can amend;")

VI

While some discuss if near the other graves
Be room enough for this, and when a day
Suits best for carrying the corpse away,
With care about the banners, scarves and staves:
And still the man hears all, and only craves
He may not shame such tender love and stay.

VII

Thus, I had so long suffered in this quest,
Heard failure prophesied so oft, been writ
So many times among "The Band" — to wit,
The knights who to the Dark Tower's search addressed
Their steps — that just to fail as they, seemed best,
And all the doubt was now — should I be fit?

VIII

So, quiet as despair, I turned from him,
That hateful cripple, out of his highway
Into the path he pointed. All the day
Had been a dreary one at best, and dim
Was settling to its close, yet shot one grim
Red leer to see the plain catch its estray.

IX

For mark! no sooner was I fairly found
Pledged to the plain, after a pace or two,
Than, pausing to throw backward a last view
O'er the safe road, 't was gone; gray plain all round:
Nothing but plain to the horizon's bound.
I might go on; naught else remained to do.

X

So, on I went. I think I never saw
Such starved ignoble nature; nothing throve:
For flowers — as well expect a cedar grove!
But cockle, spurge, according to their law
Might propagate their kind, with none to awe,
You 'd think; a burr had been a treasure-trove.

XI

No! penury, inertness and grimace,
In some strange sort, were the land's portion. "See
Or shut your eyes," said Nature peevishly,
"It nothing skills: I cannot help my case:
'T is the Last Judgment's fire must cure this place,
Calcine its clods and set my prisoners free."

XII

If there pushed any ragged thistle-stalk
Above its mates, the head was chopped; the bents
Were jealous else. What made those holes and rents
In the dock's harsh swarth leaves, bruised as to balk
All hope of greenness? 't is a brute must walk
Pashing their life out, with a brute's intents.

XIII

As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair
In leprosy; thin dry blades pricked the mud
Which underneath looked kneaded up with blood.
One stiff blind horse, his every bone a-stare,
Stood stupefied, however he came there:
Thrust out past service from the devil's stud!

XIV

Alive? he might be dead for aught I know,
With that red gaunt and colloped neck a-strain,
And shut eyes underneath the rusty mane;
Seldom went such grotesqueness with such woe;
I never saw a brute I hated so;
He must be wicked to deserve such pain.

XV

I shut my eyes and turned them on my heart.
As a man calls for wine before he fights,
I asked one draught of earlier, happier sights,
Ere fitly I could hope to play my part.
Think first, fight afterwards — the soldier's art:
One taste of the old time sets all to rights.

XVI

Not it! I fancied Cuthbert's reddening face
Beneath its garniture of curly gold,
Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold
An arm in mine to fix me to the place,
That way he used. Alas, one night's disgrace!
Out went my heart's new fire and left it cold.

XVII

Giles then, the soul of honor — there he stands
Frank as ten years ago when knighted first.
What honest man should dare (he said) he durst.
Good — but the scene shifts — faugh! what hangman hands
Pin to his breast a parchment? His own bands
Read it. Poor traitor, spit upon and curst!

XVIII

Better this present than a past like that;
Back therefore to my darkening path again!
No sound, no sight as far as eye could strain.
Will the night send a howlet or a bat?
I asked: when something on the dismal flat
Came to arrest my thoughts and change their train.

XIX

A sudden little river crossed my path
As unexpected as a serpent comes.
No sluggish tide congenial to the glooms;
This, as it frothed by, might have been a bath
For the fiend's glowing hoof — to see the wrath
Of its black eddy bespate with flakes and spumes.

XX

So petty yet so spiteful! All along,
Low scrubby alders kneeled down over it;
Drenched willows flung them headlong in a fit
Of mute despair, a suicidal throng:
The river which had done them all the wrong,
Whate'er that was, rolled by, deterred no whit.

XXI

Which, while I forded, — good saints, how I feared
To set my foot upon a dead man's cheek,
Each step, or feel the spear I thrust to seek
For hollows, tangled in his hair or beard!
— It may have been a water-rat I speared,
But, ugh, it sounded like a baby's shriek.

XXII

Glad was I when I reached the other bank.
Now for a better country. Vain presage!
Who were the strugglers, what war did they wage,
Whose savage trample thus could pad the dank
Soil to a plash? Toads in a poisoned tank,
Or wild cats in a red-hot iron cage —

XXIII

The fight must so have seemed in that fell cirque.
What penned them there, with all the plain to choose?
No foot-print leading to that horrid mews,
None out of it. Mad brewage set to work
Their brains, no doubt, like galley-slaves the Turk
Pits for his pastime, Christians against Jews.

XXIV

And more than that — a furlong on — why, there!
What bad use was that engine for, that wheel,
Or brake, not wheel — that harrow fit to reel
Men's bodies out like silk? with all the air
Of Tophet's tool, on earth left unaware,
Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth of steel.

XXV

Then came a bit of stubbed ground, once a wood,
Next a marsh, it would seem, and now mere earth
Desperate and done with; (so a fool finds mirth,
Makes a thing and then mars it, till his mood
Changes and off he goes!) within a rood —
Bog, clay and rubble, sand and stark black dearth.

XXVI

Now blotches rankling, colored gay and grim,
Now patches where some leanness of the soil's
Broke into moss or substances like boils;
Then came some palsied oak, a cleft in him
Like a distorted mouth that splits its rim
Gaping at death, and dies while it recoils.

XXVII

And just as far as ever from the end!
Naught in the distance but the evening, naught
To point my footstep further! At the thought,
A great black bird, Apollyon's bosom-friend,
Sailed past, nor beat his wide wing dragon-penned
That brushed my cap — perchance the guide I sought.

XXVIII

For, looking up, aware I somehow grew,
'Spite of the dusk, the plain had given place
All round to mountains — with such name to grace
Mere ugly heights and heaps now stolen in view.
How thus they had surprised me, — solve it, you!
How to get from them was no clearer case.

XXIX

Yet half I seemed to recognize some trick
Of mischief happened to me, God knows when —
In a bad dream perhaps. Here ended, then,
Progress this way. When, in the very nick
Of giving up, one time more, came a click
As when a trap shuts — you 're inside the den!

XXX

Burningly it came on me all at once,
This was the place! those two hills on the right,
Crouched like two bulls locked horn in horn in fight;
While to the left, a tall scalped mountain . . . Dunce,
Dotard, a-dozing at the very nonce,
After a life spent training for the sight!

XXXI

What in the midst lay but the Tower itself?
The round squat turret, blind as the fool's heart,
Built of brown stone, without a counterpart
In the whole world. The tempest's mocking elf
Points to the shipman thus the unseen shelf
He strikes on, only when the timbers start.

XXXII

Not see? because of night perhaps? — why, day
Came back again for that! before it left,
The dying sunset kindled through a cleft:
The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay,
Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay, —
"Now stab and end the creature — to the heft!"

XXXIII

Not hear? when noise was everywhere! it tolled
 Increasing like a bell. Names in my ears
 Of all the lost adventures my peers, —
How such a one was strong, and such was bold,
And such was fortunate, yet each of old
 Lost, lost! one moment knelled the woe of years.

XXXIV

There they stood, ranged along the hill-sides, met
 To view the last of me, a living frame
 For one more picture! in a sheet of flame
I saw them and I knew them all. And yet
Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set,
 And blew. "*Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came.*"

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY

1850

CHRISTMAS EVE

I

Out of the little chapel I burst
 Into the fresh night-air again.
Five minutes full, I waited first
 In the doorway, to escape the rain
That drove in gusts down the common's centre
 At the edge of which the chapel stands,
Before I plucked up heart to enter.
 Heaven knows how many sorts of hands
Reached past me, groping for the latch
Of the inner door that hung on catch
More obstinate the more they fumbled,
 Till, giving way at last with a scold
Of the crazy hinge, in squeezed or tumbled
 One sheep more to the rest in fold,
And left me irresolute, standing sentry
In the sheepfold's lath-and-plaster entry,
Six feet long by three feet wide,
Partitioned off from the vast inside —
 I blocked up half of it at least.
No remedy; the rain kept driving.
 They eyed me much as some wild beast,
That congregation, still arriving,

Some of them by the main road, white
A long way past me into the night,
Skirting the common, then diverging;
Not a few suddenly emerging
From the common's self thro' the paling-gaps,
—They house in the gravel-pits perhaps,
Where the road stops short with its safeguard border
Of lamps, as tired of such disorder; —
But the most turned in yet more abruptly
From a certain squalid knot of alleys,
Where the town's bad blood once slept corruptly,
Which now the little chapel rallies
And leads into day again, — its priestliness
Lending itself to hide their beastliness
So cleverly (thanks in part to the mason),
And putting so cheery a whitewashed face on
Those neophytes too much in lack of it,
That, where you cross the common as I did,
And meet the party thus presided,
"Mount Zion" with Love-lane at the back of it,
They front you as little disconcerted
As, bound for the hills, her fate averted,
And her wicked people made to mind him,
Lot might have marched with Gomorrah behind him.

II

Well, from the road, the lanes or the common,
In came the flock: the fat weary woman,
Panting and bewildered, down-clapping
Her umbrella with a mighty report,
Grounded it by me, wry and flapping,
A wreck of whalebones; then, with a snort,
Like a startled horse, at the interloper
(Who humbly knew himself improper,

But could not shrink up small enough)
— Round to the door, and in, — the gruff
Hinge's invariable scold
Making my very blood run cold.
Prompt in the wake of her, up-pattered
On broken clogs, the many-tattered
Little old-faced peaking sister-turned-mother
Of the sickly babe she tried to smother
Somehow up, with its spotted face,
From the cold, on her breast, the one warm place;
She too must stop, wring the poor ends dry
Of a draggled shawl, and add thereby
Her tribute to the door-mat, sopping
Already from my own clothes' dropping,
Which yet she seemed to grudge I should stand on:
Then, stooping down to take off her pattens,
She bore them defiantly, in each hand one,
Planted together before her breast
And its babe, as good as a lance in rest.
Close on her heels, the dingy satins
Of a female something, past me flitted,
With lips as much too white, as a streak
Lay far too red on each hollow cheek;
And it seemed the very door-hinge pitied
All that was left of a woman once,
Holding at least its tongue for the nonce.
Then a tall yellow man, like the Penitent Thief,
With his jaw bound up in a handkerchief,
And eyelids screwed together tight,
Led himself in by some inner light.
And, except from him, from each that entered,
I got the same interrogation —
"What, you the alien, you have ventured
To take with us, the elect, your station?
A carer for none of it, a Gallio!" —

Thus, plain as print, I read the glance
At a common prey, in each countenance
As of huntsman giving his hounds the tallyho.
And, when the door's cry drowned their wonder,
The draught, it always sent in shutting,
Made the flame of the single tallow candle
In the cracked square lantern I stood under,
Shoot its blue lip at me, rebutting
As it were, the luckless cause of scandal:
I verily fancied the zealous light
(In the chapel's secret, too!) for spite
Would shudder itself clean off the wick,
With the airs of a Saint John's Candlestick.
There was no standing it much longer.
"Good folks," thought I, as resolve grew stronger,
"This way you perform the Grand-Inquisitor
When the weather sends you a chance visitor?
You are the men, and wisdom shall die with you,
And none of the old Seven Churches vie with you!
But still, despite the pretty perfection
To which you carry your trick of exclusiveness,
And, taking God's word under wise protection,
Correct its tendency to diffusiveness,
And bid one reach it over hot ploughshares, —
Still, as I say, though you 've found salvation,
If I should choose to cry, as now, 'Shares!' —
See if the best of you bars me my ration!
I prefer, if you please, for my expounder
Of the laws of the feast, the feast's own Founder;
Mine's the same right with your poorest and sickliest
Supposing I don the marriage vestiment:
So, shut your mouth and open your Testament,
And carve me my portion at your quickliest!"
Accordingly, as a shoemaker's lad
With wizened face in want of soap,

And wet apron wound round his waist like a rope,
(After stopping outside, for his cough was bad,
To get the fit over, poor gentle creature,
And so avoid disturbing the preacher)
— Passed in, I sent my elbow spikewise
At the shutting door, and entered likewise,
Received the hinge's accustomed greeting,
And crossed the threshold's magic pentacle,
And found myself in full conventicle,
— To wit, in Zion Chapel Meeting,
On the Christmas-Eve of 'Forty-nine,
Which, calling its flock to their special clover,
Found all assembled and one sheep over,
Whose lot, as the weather pleased, was mine.

III

I very soon had enough of it.
The hot smell and the human noises,
And my neighbor's coat, the greasy cuff of it,
Were a pebble-stone that a child's hand poises,
Compared with the pig-of-lead-like pressure
Of the preaching man's immense stupidity,
As he poured his doctrine forth, full measure,
To meet his audience's avidity.
You needed not the wit of the Sibyl
To guess the cause of it all, in a twinkling:
No sooner our friend had got an inkling
Of treasure hid in the Holy Bible,
(Whene'er 't was the thought first struck him,
How death, at unawares, might duck him
Deeper than the grave, and quench
The gin-shop's light in hell's grim drench)
Then he handled it so, in fine irreverence,
As to hug the book of books to pieces:

And, a patchwork of chapters and texts in severance,
Not improved by the private dog's-ears and creases,
Having clothed his own soul with, he 'd fain see
equipt yours, —
So tossed you again your Holy Scriptures.
And you picked them up, in a sense, no doubt:
Nay, had but a single face of my neighbors
Appeared to suspect that the preacher's labors
Were help which the world could be saved without,
'T is odds but I might have borne in quiet
A qualm or two at my spiritual diet,
Or (who can tell?) perchance even mustered
Somewhat to urge in behalf of the sermon:
But the flock sat on, divinely flustered,
Sniffing, methought, its dew of Hermon
With such content in every snuffle,
As the devil inside us loves to ruffle.
My old fat woman purred with pleasure,
And thumb round thumb went twirling faster,
While she, to his periods keeping measure,
Maternally devoured the pastor.
The man with the handkerchief untied it,
Showed us a horrible wen inside it,
Gave his eyelids yet another screwing,
And rocked himself as the woman was doing.
The shoemakers' lad, discreetly choking,
Kept down his cough. 'T was too provoking!
My gorge rose at the nonsense and stuff of it;
So, saying like Eve when she plucked the apple,
"I wanted a taste, and now there 's enough of it,"
I flung out of the little chapel.

IV

There was a lull in the rain, a lull
In the wind too; the moon was risen,

And would have shone out pure and full,
 But for the ramparted cloud-prison,
Block on block built up in the West,
For what purpose the wind knows best,
Who changes his mind continually.
And the empty other half of the sky
Seemed in its silence as if it knew
What, any moment, might look through
A chance gap in that fortress massy: —
 Through its fissures you got hints
 Of the flying moon, by the shifting tints,
Now, a dull lion-color, now, brassy
Burning to yellow, and whitest yellow,
Like furnace-smoke just ere flames bellow,
All a-simmer with intense strain
To let her through, — then blank again,
At the hope of her appearance failing.
Just by the chapel, a break in the railing
Shows a narrow path directly across;
'T is ever dry walking there, on the moss —
Besides, you go gently all the way uphill.
 I stooped under and soon felt better;
My head grew lighter, my limbs more supple,
 As I walked on, glad to have slipt the fetter.
My mind was full of the scene I had left,
 That placid flock, that pastor vociferant,
 — How this outside was pure and different!
The sermon, now — what a mingled weft
Of good and ill! Were either less,
 Its fellow had colored the whole distinctly;
But alas for the excellent earnestness,
 And the truths, quite true if stated succinctly,
But as surely false, in their quaint presentment,
However to pastor and flock's contentment!
Say rather, such truths looked false to your eyes,

With his provings and parallels twisted and twined,
Till how could you know them, grown double their size
In the natural fog of the good man's mind,
Like yonder spots of our roadside lamps,
Haloed about with the common's damps?
Truth remains true, the fault 's in the prover;
The zeal was good, and the aspiration;
And yet, and yet, yet, fifty times over,
Pharaoh received no demonstration,
By his Baker's dream of Baskets Three,
Of the doctrine of the Trinity, —
Although, as our preacher thus embellished it,
Apparently his hearers relished it,
With so unfeigned a gust — who knows if
They did not prefer our friend to Joseph?
But so it is everywhere, one way with all of them!
These people have really felt, no doubt,
A something, the motion they style the Call of them;
And this is their method of bringing about,
By a mechanism of words and tones,
(So many texts in so many groans)
A sort of reviving and reproducing,
More or less perfectly, (who can tell?)
The mood itself, which strengthens by using;
And how that happens, I understand well.
A tune was born in my head last week,
Out of the thump-thump and shriek-shriek
Of the train, as I came by it, up from Manchester;
And when, next week, I take it back again,
My head will sing to the engine's clack again,
While it only makes my neighbor's haunches stir,
— Finding no dormant musical sprout
In him, as in me, to be jolted out.
'T is the taught already that profits by teaching;

He gets no more from the railway's preaching
Than, from this preacher who does the rail's office, I:
Whom therefore the flock cast a jealous eye on.
Still, why paint over their door "Mount Zion,"
To which all flesh shall come, saith the prophecy?

V

But wherefore be harsh on a single case?
After how many modes, this Christmas-Eve,
Does the self-same weary thing take place?
The same endeavor to make you believe,
And with much the same effect, no more:
Each method abundantly convincing,
As I say, to those convinced before,
But scarce to be swallowed without wincing
By the not-as-yet-convinced. For me,
I have my own church equally:
And in this church my faith sprang first!
(I said, as I reached the rising ground,
And the wind began again, with a burst
Of rain in my face, and a glad rebound
From the heart beneath, as if, God speeding me,
I entered his church-door, nature leading me)
— In youth I looked to these very skies,
And probing their immensities,
I found God there, his visible power;
Yet felt in my heart, amid all its sense
Of the power, an equal evidence
That his love, there too, was the nobler dower.
For the loving worm within its clod,
Were diviner than a loveless god
Amid his worlds, I will dare to say.
You know what I mean: God 's all, man 's naught:
But also, God, whose pleasure brought

Man into being, stands away
 As it were a handbreadth off, to give
Room for the newly-made to live,
And look at him from a place apart,
And use his gifts of brain and heart,
Given, indeed, but to keep forever.
Who speaks of man, then, must not sever
Man's very elements from man,
Saying, "But all is God's" — whose plan
Was to create man and then leave him
Able, his own word saith, to grieve him,
But able to glorify him too,
As a mere machine could never do,
That prayed or praised, all unaware
Of its fitness for aught but praise and prayer,
Made perfect as a thing of course.
Man, therefore, stands on his own stock
Of love and power as a pin-point rock:
And, looking to God who ordained divorce
Of the rock from his boundless continent,
Sees, in his power made evident,
Only excess by a million-fold
O'er the power God gave man in the mould.
For, note: man's hand, first formed to carry
A few pounds' weight, when taught to marry
Its strength with an engine's, lifts a mountain,
 — Advancing in power by one degree;
 And why count steps through eternity?
But love is the ever-springing fountain:
Man may enlarge or narrow his bed
For the water's play, but the water-head —
How can he multiply or reduce it?
 As easy create it, as cause it to cease;
He may profit by it, or abuse it,
 But 't is not a thing to bear increase

As power does: be love less or more
In the heart of man, he keeps it shut
Or opes it wide, as he pleases, but
Love's sum remains what it was before.
So, gazing up, in my youth, at love
As seen through power, ever above
All modes which make it manifest,
My soul brought all to a single test —
That he, the Eternal First and Last,
Who, in his power, had so surpassed
All man conceives of what is might, —
Whose wisdom, too, showed infinite,
— Would prove as infinitely good;
Would never, (my soul understood,)
With power to work all love desires,
Bestow e'en less than man requires;
That he who endlessly was teaching,
Above my spirit's utmost reaching,
What love can do in the leaf or stone,
(So that to master this alone,
This done in the stone or leaf for me,
I must go on learning endlessly)
Would never need that I, in turn,
Should point him out defect unheeded,
And show that God had yet to learn
What the meanest human creature needed,
— Not life, to wit, for a few short years,
Tracking his way through doubts and fears,
While the stupid earth on which I stay
Suffers no change, but passive adds
Its myriad years to myriads,
Though I, he gave it to, decay,
Seeing death come and choose about me,
And my dearest ones depart without me.
No: love which, on earth, amid all the shows of it,

Has ever been seen the sole good of life in it,
The love, ever growing there, spite of the strife in it,
Shall arise, made perfect, from death's repose of it.
And I shall behold thee, face to face,
O God, and in thy light retrace
How in all I loved here, still wast thou!
Whom pressing to, then, as I fain would now,
I shall find as able to satiate
The love, thy gift, as my spirit's wonder
Thou art able to quicken and sublimate,
With this sky of thine, that I now walk under,
And glory in thee for, as I gaze
Thus, thus! Oh, let men keep their ways
Of seeking thee in a narrow shrine —
Be this my way! And this is mine!

VI

For lo, what think you? suddenly
The rain and the wind ceased, and the sky
Received at once the full fruition
Of the moon's consummate apparition.
The black cloud-barricade was riven,
Ruined beneath her feet, and driven
Deep in the West; while, bare and breathless,
North and South and East lay ready
For a glorious thing that, dauntless, deathless,
Sprang across them and stood steady.
'T was a moon-rainbow, vast and perfect,
From heaven to heaven extending, perfect
As the mother-moon's self, full in face.
It rose, distinctly at the base
With its seven proper colors chorded,
Which still, in the rising, were compressed,

Until at last they coalesced,
And supreme the spectral creature lorded
In a triumph of whitest white, —
Above which intervened the night.
But above night too, like only the next,
The second of a wondrous sequence,
Reaching in rare and rarer frequence,
Till the heaven of heavens were circumflexed,
Another rainbow rose, a mightier,
Fainter, flushier, and flightier, —
Rapture dying along its verge.
Oh, whose foot shall I see emerge,
Whose, from the straining topmost dark,
On to the keystone of that arc?

VII

This sight was shown me, there and then, —
Me, one out of a world of men,
Singled forth, as the chance might hap
To another if, in a thunderclap
Where I heard noise and you saw flame,
Some one man knew God called his name.
For me, I think I said, "Appear!
Good were it to be ever here.
If thou wilt, let me build to thee
Service-tabernacles three,
Where, forever in thy presence,
In ecstatic acquiescence,
Far alike from thriftless learning
And ignorance's undiscerning,
I may worship and remain!"
Thus at the show above me, gazing
With upturned eyes, I felt my brain
Glutted with the glory, blazing

Throughout its whole mass, over and under
Until at length it burst asunder
And out of it bodily there streamed,
The too-much glory, as it seemed,
Passing from out me to the ground,
Then palely serpentining round
Into the dark with mazy error.

VIII

All at once I looked up with terror.
He was there.
He himself with his human air.
On the narrow pathway, just before.
I saw the back of him, no more —
He had left the chapel, then, as I.
I forgot all about the sky.
No face: only the sight
Of a sweepy garment, vast and white,
With a hem that I could recognize.
I felt terror, no surprise;
My mind filled with the cataract,
At one bound of the mighty fact.
"I remember, he did say
 Doubtless that, to this world's end,
Where two or three should meet and pray,
 He would be in the midst, their friend;
Certainly he was there with them!"
 And my pulses leaped for joy
 Of the golden thought without alloy,
That I saw his very vesture's hem.
Then rushed the blood back, cold and clear,
With a fresh enhancing shiver of fear;
And I hastened, cried out while I pressed
To the salvation of the vest,
"But not so, Lord! It cannot be

That thou, indeed, art leaving me —
Me, that have despised thy friends!
Did my heart make no amends?
Thou art the love of God — above
His power, didst hear me place his love,
And that was leaving the world for thee.
Therefore thou must not turn from me
As I had chosen the other part!
Folly and pride o'ercame my heart.
Our best is bad, nor bears thy test;
Still, it should be our very best.
I thought it best that thou, the spirit,
Be worshipped in spirit and in truth,
And in beauty, as even we require it —
Not in the forms burlesque, uncouth,
I left but now, as scarcely fitted
For thee: I knew not what I pitied.
But, all I felt there, right or wrong,
What is it to thee, who curest sinning?
Am I not weak as thou art strong?
I have looked to thee from the beginning,
Straight up to thee through all the world
Which, like an idle scroll, lay furled
To nothingness on either side:
And since the time thou wast descried,
Spite of the weak heart, so have I
Lived ever, and so fain would die,
Living and dying, thee before!
But if thou leavest me ——"

IX

Less or more,
I suppose that I spoke thus.
When, — have mercy, Lord, on us!
The whole face turned upon me full.

And I spread myself beneath it,
As when the bleacher spreads, to seethe it
In the cleansing sun, his wool, —
Steeps in the flood of noontide whiteness
Some defiled, discolored web —
So lay I, saturate with brightness.
And when the flood appeared to ebb,
Lo, I was walking, light and swift,
With my senses settling fast and steadying,
But my body caught up in the whirl and drift
Of the vesture's amplitude, still eddying
On, just before me, still to be followed,
As it carried me after with its motion:
What shall I say? — as a path were hollowed
And a man went weltering through the ocean,
Sucked along in the flying wake
Of the luminous water-snake.
Darkness and cold were cloven, as through
I passed, upborne yet walking too.
And I turned to myself at intervals, —
"So he said, so it befalls.
God who registers the cup
Of mere cold water, for his sake
To a disciple rendered up,
Disdains not his own thirst to slake
At the poorest love was ever offered:
And because my heart I proffered,
With true love trembling at the brim,
He suffers me to follow him
Forever, my own way, — dispensed
From seeking to be influenced
By all the less immediate ways
That earth, in worships manifold,
Adopts to reach, by prayer and praise,
The garment's hem, which, lo, I hold!"

X

And so we crossed the world and stopped.
For where am I, in city or plain,
Since I am 'ware of the world again?
And what is this that rises propped
With pillars of prodigious girth?
Is it really on the earth,
This miraculous Dome of God?
Has the angel's measuring-rod
Which numbered cubits, gem from gem,
'Twixt the gates of the New Jerusalem,
Meted it out, — and what he meted,
Have the sons of men completed?
— Binding, ever as he bade,
Columns in the colonnade
With arms wide open to embrace
The entry of the human race
To the breast of . . . what is it, yon building,
Ablaze in front, all paint and gilding,
With marble for brick, and stones of price
For garniture of the edifice?
Now I see; it is no dream;
It stands there and it does not seem;
For ever, in pictures, thus it looks,
And thus I have read of it in books
Often in England, leagues away,
And wondered how these fountains play,
Growing up eternally
Each to a musical water-tree,
Whose blossoms drop, a glittering boon,
Before my eyes, in the light of the moon,
To the granite lavers underneath.
Liar and dreamer in your teeth!
I, the sinner that speak to you,

Was in Rome this night, and stood, and knew
Both this and more. For see, for see,
The dark is rent, mine eye is free
To pierce the crust of the outer wall,
And I view inside, and all there, all,
As the swarming hollow of a hive,
The whole Basilica alive!
Men in the chancel, body and nave,
Men on the pillars' architrave,
Men on the statues, men on the tombs
With popes and kings in their porphyry wombs,
All famishing in expectation
Of the main-altar's consummation.
For see, for see, the rapturous moment
Approaches, and earth's best endowment
Blends with heaven's; the taper-fires
Pant up, the winding brazen spires
Heave loftier yet the baldachin;
The incense-gaspings, long kept in,
Suspire in clouds; the organ blatant
Holds his breath and grovels latent,
As if God's hushing finger grazed him,
(Like Behemoth when he praised him)
At the silver bell's shrill tinkling,
Quick cold drops of terror sprinkling
On the sudden pavement strewed
With faces of the multitude.
Earth breaks up, time drops away,
In flows heaven, with its new day
Of endless life, when He who trod,
Very man and very God,
This earth in weakness, shame and pain,
Dying the death whose signs remain
Up yonder on the accursed tree, —
Shall come again, no more to be

Of captivity the thrall,
But the one God, All in all,
King of kings, Lord of lords,
As His servant John received the words,
"I died, and live for evermore!"

XI

Yet I was left outside the door.
"Why sit I here on the threshold-stone
Left till He return, alone
Save for the garment's extreme fold
Abandoned still to bless my hold?"
My reason, to my doubt, replied,
As if a book were opened wide,
And at a certain page I traced
Every record undefaced,
Added by successive years, —
The harvestings of truth's stray ears
Singly gleaned, and in one sheaf
Bound together for belief.
Yes, I said — that he will go
And sit with these in turn, I know.
Their faith's heart beats, though her head swims
Too giddily to guide her limbs,
Disabled by their palsy-stroke
From propping mine. Though Rome's gross yoke
Drops off, no more to be endured,
Her teaching is not so obscured
By errors and perversities,
That no truth shines athwart the lies:
And he, whose eye detects a spark
Even where, to man's, the whole seems dark,
May well see flame where each beholder
Acknowledges the embers smoulder.
But I, a mere man, fear to quit

The clue God gave me as most fit
To guide my footsteps through life's maze,
Because himself discerns all ways
Open to reach him: I, a man
Able to mark where faith began
To swerve aside, till from its summit
Judgment drops her damning plummet,
Pronouncing such a fatal space
Departed from the founder's base:
He will not bid me enter too,
But rather sit, as now I do,
Awaiting his return outside.
— 'T was thus my reason straight replied
And joyously I turned, and pressed
The garment's skirt upon my breast,
Until, afresh its light suffusing me,
My heart cried — What has been abusing me
That I should wait here lonely and coldly,
Instead of rising, entering boldly,
Baring truth's face, and letting drift
Her veils of lies as they choose to shift?
Do these men praise him? I will raise
My voice up to their point of praise!
I see the error; but above
The scope of error, see the love. —
Oh, love of those first Christian days!
— Fanned so soon into a blaze,
From the spark preserved by the trampled sect,
That the antique sovereign Intellect
Which then sat ruling in the world,
Like a change in dreams, was hurled
From the throne he reigned upon:
You looked up and he was gone.
Gone, his glory of the pen!
— Love, with Greece and Rome in ken,

Bade her scribes abhor the trick
Of poetry and rhetoric,
And exult with hearts set free,
In blessed imbecility
Scrawled, perchance, on some torn sheet
Leaving Sallust incomplete.
Gone, his pride of sculptor, painter!
— Love, while able to acquaint her
While the thousand statues yet
Fresh from chisel, pictures wet
From brush, she saw on every side,
Chose rather with an infant's pride
To frame those portents which impart
Such unction to true Christian Art.
Gone, music too! The air was stirred
By happy wings: Terpander's bird
(That, when the cold came, fled away)
Would tarry not the wintry day, —
As more-enduring sculpture must,
Till filthy saints rebuked the gust
With which they chanced to get a sight
Of some dear naked Aphrodite
They glanced a thought above the toes of,
By breaking zealously her nose off.
Love, surely, from that music's lingering,
Might have filched her organ-fingering,
Nor chosen rather to set prayings
To hog-grunts, praises to horse-neighings.
Love was the startling thing, the new:
Love was the all-sufficient too;
And seeing that, you see the rest:
As a babe can find its mother's breast
As well in darkness as in light,
Love shut our eyes, and all seemed right.
True, the world's eyes are open now:

— Less need for me to disallow
Some few that keep Love's zone unbuckled,
Peevish as ever to be suckled,
Lulled by the same old baby-prattle
With intermixture of the rattle,
When she would have them creep, stand steady
Upon their feet, or walk already,
Not to speak of trying to climb.
I will be wise another time,
And not desire a wall between us,
When next I see a church-roof cover
So many species of one genus,
All with foreheads bearing *lover*
Written above the earnest eyes of them;
All with breasts that beat for beauty,
Whether sublimed, to the surprise of them,
In noble daring, steadfast duty,
The heroic in passion, or in action, —
Or, lowered for sense's satisfaction,
To the mere outside of human creatures,
Mere perfect form and faultless features.
What? with all Rome here, whence to levy
Such contributions to their appetite,
With women and men in a gorgeous bevy,
They take, as it were, a padlock, clap it tight
On their southern eyes, restrained from feeding
On the glories of their ancient reading,
On the beauties of their modern singing,
On the wonders of the builder's bringing,
On the majesties of Art around them, —
And, all these loves, late struggling incessant,
When faith has at last united and bound them,
They offer up to God for a present?
Why, I will, on the whole, be rather proud of it, —
And, only taking the act in reference

To the other recipients who might have allowed it,
I will rejoice that God had the preference.

XII

So I summed up my new resolves:
Too much love there can never be.
And where the intellect devolves
Its function on love exclusively,
I, a man who possesses both,
Will accept the provision, nothing loth,
— Will feast my love, then depart elsewhere,
That my intellect may find its share.
And ponder, O soul, the while thou departest,
And see thou applaud the great heart of the artist
Who, examining the capabilities
Of the block of marble he has to fashion
Into a type of thought or passion, —
Not always, using obvious facilities,
Shapes it, as any artist can,
Into a perfect symmetrical man,
Complete from head to foot of the life-size,
Such as old Adam stood in his wife's eyes, —
But, now and then, bravely aspires to consummate
A Colossus by no means so easy to come at,
And uses the whole of his block for the bust,
Leaving the mind of the public to finish it,
Since cut it ruefully short he must:
On the face alone he expends his devotion,
He rather would mar than resolve to diminish it,
— Saying, "Applaud me for this grand notion
Of what a face may be! As for completing it
In breast and body and limbs, do that, you!"
All hail! I fancy how, happily meeting it,
A trunk and legs would perfect the statue,
Could man carve so as to answer volition.

And how much nobler than petty cavils,
Were a hope to find, in my spirit-travels,
Some artist of another ambition,
Who having a block to carve, no bigger,
Has spent his power on the opposite quest,
And believed to begin at the feet was best —
For so may I see, ere I die, the whole figure!

XIII

No sooner said than out in the night!
My heart beat lighter and more light:
And still, as before, I was walking swift,
With my senses settling fast and steadying,
But my body caught up in the whirl and drift
Of the vesture's amplitude, still eddying
On just before me, still to be followed,
As it carried me after with its motion,
— What shall I say? — as a path were hollowed,
And a man went weltering through the ocean,
Sucked along in the flying wake
Of the luminous water-snake.

XIV

Alone! I am left alone once more —
(Save for the garment's extreme fold
Abandoned still to bless my hold)
Alone, beside the entrance-door
Of a sort of temple, — perhaps a college,
— Like nothing I ever saw before
At home in England, to my knowledge.
The tall old quaint irregular town!
It may be . . . though which, I can't affirm . . .
any
Of the famous middle-age towns of Germany;

And this flight of stairs where I sit down,
Is it Halle, Weimar, Cassel, Frankfort
Or Göttingen, I have to thank for 't?
It may be Göttingen, — most likely.
Through the open door I catch obliquely
Glimpses of a lecture-hall;
 And not a bad assembly neither,
Ranged decent and symmetrical
 On benches, waiting what 's to see there;
Which, holding still by the vesture's hem,
I also resolve to see with them,
Cautious this time how I suffer to slip
The chance of joining in fellowship
With any that call themselves his friends;
 As these folk do, I have a notion.
 But hist — a buzzing and emotion!
All settle themselves, the while ascends
By the creaking rail to the lecture-desk,
 Step by step, deliberate
 Because of his cranium's over-freight,
Three parts sublime to one grotesque,
If I have proved an accurate guesser,
The hawk-nosed high-cheek-boned Professor.
I felt at once as if there ran
A shoot of love from my heart to the man —
That sallow virgin-minded studious
 Martyr to mild enthusiasm,
As he uttered a kind of cough-preludious
 That woke my sympathetic spasm,
(Beside some spitting that made me sorry)
And stood, surveying his auditory
With a wan pure look, well nigh celestial, —
 Those blue eyes had survived so much!
 While, under the foot they could not smutch,
Lay all the fleshly and the bestial.

Over he bowed, and arranged his notes,
Till the auditory's clearing of throats
Was done with, died into a silence;
And, when each glance was upward sent,
Each bearded mouth composed intent,
And a pin might be heard drop half a mile hence, —
He pushed back higher his spectacles,
Let the eyes stream out like lamps from cells,
And giving his head of hair — a hake
Of undressed tow, for color and quantity —
One rapid and impatient shake,
(As our own Young England adjusts a jaunty tie
When about to impart, on mature digestion,
Some thrilling view of the surplice-question)
— The Professor's grave voice, sweet though hoarse,
Broke into his Christmas-Eve discourse.

XV

And he began it by observing
How reason dictated that men
Should rectify the natural swerving,
By a reversion, now and then,
To the well-heads of knowledge, few
And far away, whence rolling grew
The life-stream wide whereat we drink,
Commingled, as we needs must think,
With waters alien to the source;
To do which, aimed this eve's discourse;
Since, where could be a fitter time
For tracing backward to its prime
This Christianity, this lake,
This reservoir, whereat we slake,
From one or other bank, our thirst?
So, he proposed inquiring first

Into the various sources whence
This Myth of Christ is derivable;
Demanding from the evidence,
(Since plainly no such life was liveable)
How these phenomena should class?
Whether 't were best opine Christ was,
Or never was at all, or whether
He was and was not, both together —
It matters little for the name,
So the idea be left the same.
Only, for practical purpose' sake,
'T was obviously as well to take
The popular story, — understanding
How the ineptitude of the time,
And the penman's prejudice, expanding
Fact into fable fit for the clime,
Had, by slow and sure degrees, translated it
Into this myth, this Individuum, —
Which, when reason had strained and abated it
Of foreign matter, left, for residuum,
A Man! — a right true man, however,
Whose work was worthy a man's endeavor:
Work, that gave warrant almost sufficient
To his disciples, for rather believing
He was just omnipotent and omniscient,
As it gives to us, for as frankly receiving
His word, their tradition, — which, though it meant
Something entirely different
From all that those who only heard it,
In their simplicity thought and averred it,
Had yet a meaning quite as respectable:
For, among other doctrines delectable,
Was he not surely the first to insist on
The natural sovereignty of our race? —
Here the lecturer came to a pausing-place.

And while his cough, like a drouthy piston,
Tried to dislodge the husk that grew to him,
I seized the occasion of bidding adieu to him,
The vesture still within my hand.

XVI

I could interpret its command.
This time he would not bid me enter
The exhausted air-bell of the Critic.
Truth's atmosphere may grow mephitic
When Papist struggles with Dissenter,
Impregnating its pristine clarity,
— One, by his daily fare's vulgarity,
Its gust of broken meat and garlic;
— One, by his soul's too-much presuming
To turn the frankincense's fuming
And vapors of the candle starlike
Into the cloud her wings she buoys on.
Each, that thus sets the pure air seething,
May poison it for healthy breathing —
But the Critic leaves no air to poison;
Pumps out with ruthless ingenuity
Atom by atom, and leaves you — vacuity.
Thus much of Christ does he reject?
And what retain? His intellect?
What is it I must reverence duly?
Poor intellect for worship, truly,
Which tells me simply what was told
(If mere morality, bereft
Of the God in Christ be all that 's left)
Elsewhere by voices manifold;
With this advantage, that the stater
Made nowise the important stumble
Of adding, he, the sage and humble,

Was also one with the Creator.
You urge Christ's followers' simplicity:
 But how does shifting blame, evade it?
Have wisdom's words no more felicity?
 The stumbling-block, his speech — who laid it?
How comes it that for one found able
To sift the truth of it from fable,
Millions believe it to the letter?
Christ's goodness, then — does that fare better?
Strange goodness, which upon the score
 Of being goodness, the mere due
Of man to fellow-man, much more
 To God, — should take another view
Of its possessor's privilege,
And bid him rule his race! You pledge
Your fealty to such rule? What, all —
From heavenly John and Attic Paul,
And that brave weather-battered Peter,
Whose stout faith only stood completer
For buffets, sinning to be pardoned,
As, more his hands hauled nets, they hardened, —
All, down to you, the man of men,
Professing here at Göttingen,
Compose Christ's flock! They, you and I,
Are sheep of a good man! And why?
The goodness, — how did he acquire it?
Was it self-gained, did God inspire it?
Choose which; then tell me, on what ground
Should its possessor dare propound
His claim to rise o'er us an inch?
 Were goodness all some man's invention,
 Who arbitrarily made mention
What we should follow, and whence flinch, —
What qualities might take the style
 Of right and wrong, — and had such guessing

Met with as general acquiescing
As graced the alphabet erewhile,
When A got leave an Ox to be,
No Camel (quoth the Jews) like G, —
For thus inventing thing and title
Worship were that man's fit requital.
But if the common conscience must
Be ultimately judge, adjust
Its apt name to each quality
Already known, — I would decree
Worship for such mere demonstration
And simple work of nomenclature,
Only the day I praised, not nature,
But Harvey, for the circulation.
I would praise such a Christ, with pride
And joy, that he, as none beside,
Had taught us how to keep the mind
God gave him, as God gave his kind,
Freer than they from fleshly taint:
I would call such a Christ our Saint,
As I declare our Poet, him
Whose insight makes all others dim:
A thousand poets pried at life,
And only one amid the strife
Rose to be Shakespeare: each shall take
His crown, I 'd say, for the world's sake —
Though some objected — "Had we seen
The heart and head of each, what screen
Was broken there to give them light,
While in ourselves it shuts the sight,
We should no more admire, perchance,
That these found truth out at a glance,
Than marvel how the bat discerns
Some pitch-dark cavern's fifty turns,
Led by a finer tact, a gift

He boasts, which other birds must shift
Without, and grope as best they can."
No, freely I would praise the man, —
Nor one whit more, if he contended
That gift of his, from God descended.
Ah friend, what gift of man's does not?
No nearer something, by a jot,
Rise an infinity of nothings
 Than one: take Euclid for your teacher:
Distinguish kinds: do crownings, clothings,
 Make that creator which was creature?
Multiply gifts upon man's head,
And what, when all 's done, shall be said
But — the more gifted he, I ween!
 That one 's made Christ, this other, Pilate,
And this might be all that has been, —
 So what is there to frown or smile at?
What is left for us, save, in growth
Of soul, to rise up, far past both,
From the gift looking to the giver,
And from the cistern to the river,
And from the finite to infinity,
And from man's dust to God's divinity?

XVII

Take all in a word: the truth in God's breast
Lies trace for trace upon ours impressed:
Though he is so bright and we so dim,
We are made in his image to witness him:
And were no eye in us to tell,
 Instructed by no inner sense,
The light of heaven from the dark of hell,
 That light would want its evidence, —
Though justice, good and truth were still
Divine, if, by some demon's will,

Hatred and wrong had been proclaimed
Law through the worlds, and right misnamed.
No mere exposition of morality
Made or in part or in totality,
Should win you to give it worship, therefore:
And, if no better proof you will care for,
— Whom do you count the worst man upon earth?
Be sure, he knows, in his conscience, more
Of what right is, than arrives at birth
In the best man's acts that we bow before:
This last knows better — true, but my fact is,
'T is one thing to know, and another to practise.
And thence I conclude that the real God-function
Is to furnish a motive and injunction
For practising what we know already.
And such an injunction and such a motive
As the God in Christ, do you waive, and "heady,
High-minded," hang your tablet-votive
Outside the fane on a finger-post?
Morality to the uttermost,
Supreme in Christ as we all confess,
Why need we prove would avail no jot
To make him God, if God he were not?
What is the point where himself lays stress?
Does the precept run "Believe in good,
In justice, truth, now understood
For the first time?" — or, "Believe in me,
Who lived and died, yet essentially
Am Lord of Life?" Whoever can take
The same to his heart and for mere love's sake
Conceive of the love, — that man obtains
A new truth; no conviction gains
Of an old one only, made intense
By a fresh appeal to his faded sense.

XVIII

Can it be that he stays inside?
Is the vesture left me to commune with?
Could my soul find aught to sing in tune with
Even at this lecture, if she tried?
Oh, let me at lowest sympathize
With the lurking drop of blood that lies
In the desiccated brain's white roots
Without throb for Christ's attributes,
As the lecturer makes his special boast!
If love 's dead there, it has left a ghost.
Admire we, how from heart to brain
(Though to say so strike the doctors dumb)
One instinct rises and falls again,
Restoring the equilibrium.
And how when the Critic had done his best,
And the pearl of price, at reason's test,
Lay dust and ashes levigable
On the Professor's lecture-table, —
When we looked for the inference and monition
That our faith, reduced to such condition,
Be swept forthwith to its natural dust-hole, —
He bids us, when we least expect it,
Take back our faith, — if it be not just whole,
Yet a pearl indeed, as his tests affect it,
Which fact pays damage done rewardingly,
So, prize we our dust and ashes accordingly!
"Go home and venerate the myth
I thus have experimented with —
This man, continue to adore him
Rather than all who went before him,
And all who ever followed after!" —
Surely for this I may praise you, my brother!
Will you take the praise in tears or laughter?

That 's one point gained: can I compass another?
Unlearned love was safe from spurning —
Can't we respect your loveless learning?
Let us at least give learning honor!
What laurels had we showered upon her,
Girding her loins up to perturb
Our theory of the Middle Verb;
Or Turk-like brandishing a scimitar
O'er anapæsts in comic-trimeter;
Or curing the halt and maimed 'Iketides,'
While we lounged on at our indebted ease:
Instead of which, a tricksy demon
Sets her at Titus or Philemon!
When ignorance wags his ears of leather
And hates God's word, 't is altogether;
Nor leaves he his congenial thistles
To go and browse on Paul's Epistles.
— And you, the audience, who might ravage
The world wide, enviably savage,
Nor heed the cry of the retriever,
More than Herr Heine (before his fever), —
I do not tell a lie so arrant
As say my passion's wings are furled up,
And, without plainest heavenly warrant,
I were ready and glad to give the world up —
But still, when you rub brow meticulous,
And ponder the profit of turning holy
If not for God's, for your own sake solely,
— God forbid I should find you ridiculous!
Deduce from this lecture all that eases you,
Nay, call yourselves, if the calling pleases you,
"Christians," — abhor the deist's pravity, —
Go on, you shall no more move my gravity
Than, when I see boys ride a-cockhorse,
I find it in my heart to embarrass them

By hinting that their stick 's a mock horse,
And they really carry what they say carries them.

XIX

So sat I talking with my mind.
I did not long to leave the door
And find a new church, as before,
But rather was quiet and inclined
To prolong and enjoy the gentle resting
From further tracking and trying and testing.
"This tolerance is a genial mood!"
(Said I, and a little pause ensued).
"One trims the bark 'twixt shoal and shelf,
And sees, each side, the good effects of it,
A value for religion's self,
A carelessness about the sects of it.
Let me enjoy my own conviction,
Nor watch my neighbor's faith with fretfulness,
Still spying there some dereliction
Of truth, perversity, forgetfulness!
Better a mild indifferentism,
Teaching that both our faiths (though duller
His shine through a dull spirit's prism)
Originally had one color!
Better pursue a pilgrimage
Through ancient and through modern times
To many peoples, various climes,
Where I may see saint, savage, sage
Fuse their respective creeds in one
Before the general Father's throne!

XX

— 'T was the horrible storm began afresh!
The black night caught me in his mesh,

Whirled me up, and flung me prone,
I was left on the college-step alone.
I looked, and far there, ever fleeting
Far, far away, the receding gesture,
And looming of the lessening vesture! —
Swept forward from my stupid hand,
While I watched my foolish heart expand
In the lazy glow of benevolence,
O'er the various modes of man's belief.
I sprang up with fear's vehemence.
Needs must there be one way, our chief
Best way of worship: let me strive
To find it, and when found, contrive
My fellows also take their share!
This constitutes my earthly care:
God's is above it and distinct.
For I, a man, with men am linked
And not a brute with brutes; no gain
That I experience, must remain
Unshared: but should my best endeavor
To share it, fail — subsisteth ever
God's care above, and I exult
That God, by God's own ways occult,
May — doth, I will believe — bring back
All wanderers to a single track.
Meantime, I can but testify
God's care for me — no more, can I —
It is but for myself I know;
The world rolls witnessing around me
Only to leave me as it found me;
Men cry there, but my ear is slow:
Their races flourish or decay
— What boots it, while yon lucid way
Loaded with stars divides the vault?
But soon my soul repairs its fault

When, sharpen'ng sense's hebetude,
She turns on my own life! So viewed,
No mere mote's-breadth but teems immense
With witnessings of providence:
And woe to me if when I look
Upon that record, the sole book
Unsealed to me, I take no heed
Of any warning that I read!
Have I been sure, this Christmas-Eve,
God's own hand did the rainbow weave,
Whereby the truth from heaven slid
Into my soul? — I cannot bid
The world admit he stooped to heal
My soul, as if in a thunder-peal
Where one heard noise, and one saw flame,
I only knew he named my name:
But what is the world to me, for sorrow
Or joy in its censure, when to-morrow
It drops the remark, with just-turned head
Then, on again, 'That man is dead'?
Yes, but for me — my name called, — drawn
As a conscript's lot from the lap's black yawn,
He has dipt into on a battle-dawn:
Bid out of life by a nod, a glance, —
Stumbling, mute-mazed, at nature's chance, —
With a rapid finger circled round,
Fixed to the first poor inch of ground
To fight from, where his foot was found;
Whose ear but a minute since lay free
To the wide camp's buzz and gossipry —
Summoned, a solitary man
To end his life where his life began,
From the safe glad rear, to the dreadful van!
Soul of mine, hadst thou caught and held
By the hem of the vesture! —

XXI

And I caught
At the flying robe, and unrepelled
Was lapped again in its folds full-fraught
With warmth and wonder and delight,
God's mercy being infinite.
For scarce had the words escaped my tongue,
When, at a passionate bound, I sprung,
Out of the wandering world of rain,
Into the little chapel again.

XXII

How else was I found there, bolt upright
On my bench, as if I had never left it?
— Never flung out on the common at night,
Nor met the storm and wedge-like cleft it,
Seen the raree-show of Peter's successor,
Or the laboratory of the Professor!
For the Vision, that was true, I wist,
True as that heaven and earth exist.
There sat my friend, the yellow and tall,
With his neck and its wen in the selfsame place;
Yet my nearest neighbor's cheek showed gall,
She had slid away a contemptuous space:
And the old fat woman, late so placable,
Eyed me with symptoms, hardly mistakable,
Of her milk of kindness turning rancid.
In short, a spectator might have fancied
That I had nodded, betrayed by slumber,
Yet kept my seat, a warning ghastly,
Through the heads of the sermon, nine in number,
And woke up now at the tenth and lastly.
But again, could such disgrace have happened?
Each friend at my elbow had surely nudged it;

And, as for the sermon, where did my nap end?
 Unless I heard it, could I have judged it?
Could I report as I do at the close,
First, the preacher speaks through his nose:
Second, his gesture is too emphatic:
 Thirdly, to waive what 's pedagogic,
 The subject-matter itself lacks logic:
Fourthly, the English is ungrammatic.
Great news! the preacher is found no Pascal,
Whom, if I pleased, I might to the task call
Of making square to a finite eye
The circle of infinity,
And find so all-but-just-succeeding!
Great news! the sermon proves no reading
Where bee-like in the flowers I bury me,
Like Taylor's the immortal Jeremy!
And now that I know the very worst of him,
What was it I thought to obtain at first of him?
Ha! Is God mocked, as he asks?
Shall I take on me to change his tasks,
And dare, despatched to a river-head
 For a simple draught of the element,
Neglect the thing for which he sent,
 And return with another thing instead? —
Saying, "Because the water found
Welling up from underground,
Is mingled with the taints of earth,
While thou, I know, dost laugh at dearth,
And couldst, at wink or word, convulse
The world with the leap of a river-pulse, —
Therefore I turned from the oozings muddy,
 And bring thee a chalice I found, instead:
See the brave veins in the breccia ruddy!
 One would suppose that the marble bled.
What matters the water? A hope I have nursed:

The waterless cup will quench my thirst."
— Better have knelt at the poorest stream
That trickles in pain from the straitest rift!
For the less or the more is all God's gift,
Who blocks up or breaks wide the granite-seam.
And here, is there water or not, to drink?
I then, in ignorance and weakness,
Taking God's help, have attained to think
My heart does best to receive in meekness
That mode of worship, as most to his mind,
Where earthly aids being cast behind,
His All in All appears serene
With the thinnest human veil between,
Letting the mystic lamps, the seven,
The many motions of his spirit,
Pass, as they list, to earth from heaven.
For the preacher's merit or demerit,
It were to be wished the flaws were fewer
In the earthen vessel, holding treasure
Which lies as safe in a golden ewer;
But the main thing is, does it hold good measure?
Heaven soon sets right all other matters! —
Ask, else, these ruins of humanity,
This flesh worn out to rags and tatters,
This soul at struggle with insanity,
Who thence take comfort — can I doubt? —
Which an empire gained, were a loss without.
May it be mine! And let us hope
That no worse blessing befall the Pope,
Turned sick at last of to-day's buffoonery,
Of posturings and petticoatings,
Beside his Bourbon bully's gloatings
In the bloody orgies of drunk poltroonery!
Nor may the Professor forego its peace
At Göttingen presently, when, in the dusk

Of his life, if his cough, as I fear, should increase,
Prophesied of by that horrible husk —
When thicker and thicker the darkness fills
The world through his misty spectacles,
And he gropes for something more substantial
Than a fable, myth or personification, —
May Christ do for him what no mere man shall,
And stand confessed as the God of salvation!
Meantime, in the still recurring fear
Lest myself, at unawares, be found,
While attacking the choice of my neighbors round,
With none of my own made — I choose here!
The giving out of the hymn reclaims me;
I have done: and if any blames me,
Thinking that merely to touch in brevity
The topics I dwell on, were unlawful, —
Or worse, that I trench, with undue levity,
On the bounds of the holy and the awful, —
I praise the heart, and pity the head of him,
And refer myself to THEE, instead of him,
Who head and heart alike discernest,
Looking below light speech we utter,
When frothy spume and frequent sputter
Prove that the soul's depths boil in earnest!
May truth shine out, stand ever before us!
I put up pencil and join chorus
To Hepzibah Tune, without further apology,
The last five verses of the third section
Of the seventeenth hymn of Whitfield's Collection,
To conclude with the doxology.

EASTER-DAY

I

How very hard it is to be
A Christian! Hard for you and me,
— Not the mere task of making real
That duty up to its ideal,
Effecting thus, complete and whole,
A purpose of the human soul —
For that is always hard to do;
But hard, I mean, for me and you
To realize it, more or less,
With even the moderate success
Which commonly repays our strife
To carry out the aims of life.
"This aim is greater," you will say,
"And so more arduous every way."
— But the importance of their fruits
Still proves to man, in all pursuits,
Proportional encouragement.
"Then, what if it be God's intent
That labor to this one result
Should seem unduly difficult?"
Ah, that 's a question in the dark —
And the sole thing that I remark
Upon the difficulty, this;
We do not see it where it is,
At the beginning of the race:
As we proceed, it shifts its place,
And where we looked for crowns to fall,
We find the tug 's to come, — that 's all.

II

At first you say, "The whole, or chief
Of difficulties, is belief.
Could I believe once thoroughly,

The rest were simple. What? Am I
An idiot, do you think, — a beast?
Prove to me, only that the least
Command of God is God's indeed,
And what injunction shall I need
To pay obedience? Death so nigh,
When time must end, eternity
Begin, — and cannot I compute,
Weigh loss and gain together, suit
My actions to the balance drawn,
And give my body to be sawn
Asunder, hacked in pieces, tied
To horses, stoned, burned, crucified,
Like any martyr of the list?
How gladly! — if I make acquist,
Through the brief minute's fierce annoy,
Of God's eternity of joy."

III

— And certainly you name the point
Whereon all turns: for could you joint
This flexile finite life once tight
Into the fixed and infinite,
You, safe inside, would spurn what 's out,
With carelessness enough, no doubt —
Would spurn mere life: but when time brings
To their next stage your reasonings,
Your eyes, late wide, begin to wink
Nor see the path so well, I think.

IV

You say, "Faith may be, one agrees,
A touchstone for God's purposes,
Even as ourselves conceive of them.
Could he acquit us or condemn

For holding what no hand can loose,
Rejecting when we can't but choose?
As well award the victor's wreath
To whosoever should take breath
Duly each minute while he lived —
Grant heaven, because a man contrived
To see its sunlight every day
He walked forth on the public way.
You must mix some uncertainty
With faith, if you would have faith be.
Why, what but faith, do we abhor
And idolize each other for —
Faith in our evil or our good,
Which is or is not understood
Aright by those we love or those
We hate, thence called our friends or foes?
Your mistress saw your spirit's grace,
When, turning from the ugly face,
I found belief in it too hard;
And she and I have our reward.
— Yet here a doubt peeps: well for us
Weak beings, to go using thus
A touchstone for our little ends,
Trying with faith the foes and friends;
— But God, bethink you! I would fain
Conceive of the Creator's reign
As based upon exacter laws
Than creatures build by with applause.
In all God's acts — (as Plato cries
He doth) — he should geometrize.
Whence, I desiderate . . ."

V

I see!
You would grow as a natural tree,

Stand as a rock, soar up like fire.
The world 's so perfect and entire,
Quite above faith, so right and fit!
Go there, walk up and down in it!
No. The creation travails, groans —
Contrive your music from its moans,
Without or let or hindrance, friend!
That 's an old story, and its end
As old — you come back (be sincere)
With every question you put here
(Here where there once was, and is still,
We think, a living oracle,
Whose answers you stand carping at)
This time flung back unanswered flat, —
Beside, perhaps, as many more
As those that drove you out before,
Now added, where was little need.
Questions impossible, indeed,
To us who sat still, all and each
Persuaded that our earth had speech,
Of God's, writ down, no matter if
In cursive type or hieroglyph, —
Which one fact freed us from the yoke
Of guessing why He never spoke.
You come back in no better plight
Than when you left us, — am I right?

VI

So, the old process, I conclude,
Goes on, the reasoning 's pursued
Further. You own, " 'T is well averred,
A scientific faith 's absurd,
— Frustrates the very end 't was meant
To serve. So, I would rest content
With a mere probability,

But, probable; the chance must lie
Clear on one side, — lie all in rough,
So long as there be just enough
To pin my faith to, though it hap
Only at points: from gap to gap
One hangs up a huge curtain so,
Grandly, nor seeks to have it go
Foldless and flat along the wall.
What care I if some interval
Of life less plainly may depend
On God? I 'd hang there to the end;
And thus I should not find it hard
To be a Christian and debarred
From trailing on the earth, till furled
Away by death. — Renounce the world!
Were that a mighty hardship? Plan
A pleasant life, and straight some man
Beside you, with, if he thought fit,
Abundant means to compass it,
Shall turn deliberate aside
To try and live as, if you tried
You clearly might, yet most despise.
One friend of mine wears out his eyes,
Slighting the stupid joys of sense,
In patient hope that, ten years hence,
'Somewhat completer,' he may say,
'My list of *coleoptera!*'
While just the other who most laughs
At him, above all epitaphs
Aspires to have his tomb describe
Himself as sole among the tribe
Of snuffbox-fanciers, who possessed
A Grignon with the Regent's crest.
So that, subduing, as you want,
Whatever stand predominant

Among my earthly appetites
For tastes and smells and sounds and sights,
I shall be doing that alone,
To gain a palm-branch and a throne.
Which fifty people undertake
To do, and gladly, for the sake
Of giving a Semitic guess,
Or playing pawns at blindfold chess."

VII

Good: and the next thing is, — look round
For evidence enough! 'T is found,
No doubt: as is your sort of mind,
So is your sort of search: you 'll find
What you desire, and that 's to be
A Christian. What says history?
How comforting a point it were
To find some mummy-scrap declare
There lived a Moses! Better still,
Prove Jonah's whale translatable
Into some quicksand of the seas,
Isle, cavern, rock, or what you please,
That faith might flap her wings and crow
From such an eminence! Or, no —
The human heart 's best; you prefer
Making that prove the minister
To truth; you probe its wants and needs,
And hopes and fears, then try what creeds
Meet these most aptly, — resolute
That faith plucks such substantial fruit
Wherever these two correspond,
She little needs to look beyond,
And puzzle out who Orpheus was,
Or Dionysius Zagrias.
You 'll find sufficient, as I say,

To satisfy you either way;
You wanted to believe; your pains
Are crowned — you do: and what remains?
"Renounce the world!" — Ah, were it done
By merely cutting one by one
Your limbs off, with your wise head last,
How easy were it! — how soon past,
If once in the believing mood!
"Such is man's usual gratitude,
Such thanks to God do we return,
For not exacting that we spurn
A single gift of life, forego
One real gain, — only taste them so
With gravity and temperance,
That those mild virtues may enhance
Such pleasures, rather than abstract —
Last spice of which, will be the fact
Of love discerned in every gift;
While, when the scene of life shall shift,
And the gay heart be taught to ache,
As sorrows and privations take
The place of joy, — the thing that seems
Mere misery, under human schemes,
Becomes, regarded by the light
Of love, as very near, or quite
As good a gift as joy before.
So plain is it that, all the more
A dispensation 's merciful,
More pettishly we try and cull
Briers, thistles, from our private plot,
To mar God's ground where thorns are not!"

VIII

Do you say this, or I? — Oh, you!
Then, what, my friend? — (thus I pursue

Our parley) — you indeed opine
That the Eternal and Divine
Did, eighteen centuries ago,
In very truth . . . Enough! you know
The all-stupendous tale, — that Birth,
That Life, that Death! And all, the earth
Shuddered at, — all, the heavens grew black
Rather than see; all, nature's rack
And throe at dissolution's brink
Attested, — all took place, you think,
Only to give our joys a zest,
And prove our sorrows for the best?
We differ, then! Where I, still pale
And heartstruck at the dreadful tale,
Waiting to hear God's voice declare
What horror followed for my share,
As implicated in the deed,
Apart from other sins, — concede
That if He blacked out in a blot
My brief life's pleasantness, 't were not
So very disproportionate!
Or there might be another fate —
I certainly could understand
(If fancies were the thing in hand)
How God might save, at that day's price,
The impure in their impurities,
Give license formal and complete
To choose the fair and pick the sweet.
But there be certain words, broad, plain,
Uttered again and yet again,
Hard to mistake or overgloss —
Announcing this world's gain for loss,
And bidding us reject the same:
The whole world lieth (they proclaim)
In wickedness, — come out of it!

Turn a deaf ear, if you think fit,
But I who thrill through every nerve
At thought of what deaf ears deserve —
How do you counsel in the case?

IX

"I 'd take, by all means, in your place,
The safe side, since it so appears:
Deny myself, a few brief years,
The natural pleasure, leave the fruit
Or cut the plant up by the root.
Remember what a martyr said
On the rude tablet overhead!
'I was born sickly, poor and mean,
A slave: no misery could screen
The holders of the pearl of price
From Cæsar's envy; therefore twice
I fought with beasts, and three times saw
My children suffer by his law;
At last my own release was earned:
I was some time in being burned,
But at the close a Hand came through
The fire above my head, and drew
My soul to Christ, whom now I see.
Sergius, a brother, writes for me
This testimony on the wall —
For me, I have forgot it all.'
You say right; this were not so hard!
And since one nowise is debarred
From this, why not escape some sins
By such a method?"

X

Then begins
To the old point revulsion new —

(For 't is just this I bring you to —
If after all we should mistake,
And so renounce life for the sake
Of death and nothing else? You hear
Each friend we jeered at, send the jeer
Back to ourselves with good effect —
"There were my beetles to collect!
My box — a trifle, I confess,
But here I hold it, ne'ertheless!"
Poor idiots, (let us pluck up heart
And answer) we, the better part
Have chosen, though 't were only hope, —
Nor envy moles like you that grope
Amid your veritable muck,
More than the grasshoppers would truck,
For yours, their passionate life away,
That spends itself in leaps all day
To reach the sun, you want the eyes
To see, as they the wings to rise
And match the noble hearts of them!
Thus the contemner we contemn, —
And, when doubt strikes us, thus we ward
Its stroke off, caught upon our guard,
— Not struck enough to overturn
Our faith, but shake it — make us learn
What I began with, and, I wis,
End, having proved, — how hard it is
To be a Christian!

XI

"Proved, or not,
Howe'er you wis, small thanks, I wot,
You get of mine, for taking pains
To make it hard to me. Who gains
By that, I wonder? Here I live

In trusting ease; and here you drive
At causing me to lose what most
Yourself would mourn for had you lost!"

XII

But, do you see, my friend, that thus
You leave Saint Paul for Æschylus?
— Who made his Titan's arch-device
The giving men *blind hopes* to spice
The meal of life with, else devoured
In bitter haste, while lo, death loured
Before them at the platter's edge!
If faith should be, as I allege,
Quite other than a condiment
To heighten flavors with, or meant
(Like that brave curry of his Grace)
To take at need the victual's place?
If, having dined, you would digest
Besides, and turning to your rest
Should find instead . . .

XIII

Now, you shall see
And judge if a mere foppery
Pricks on my speaking! I resolve
To utter — yes, it shall devolve
On you to hear as solemn, strange
And dread a thing as in the range
Of facts, — or fancies, if God will —
E'er happened to our kind! I still
Stand in the cloud and, while it wraps
My face, ought not to speak perhaps;
Seeing that if I carry through
My purpose, if my words in you

Find a live actual listener,
My story, reason must aver
False after all —the happy chance!
While, if each human countenance
I meet in London day by day,
Be what I fear, — my warnings fray
No one, and no one they convert,
And no one helps me to assert
How hard it is to really be
A Christian, and in vacancy
I pour this story!

XIV

I commence
By trying to inform you, whence
It comes that every Easter-night
As now, I sit up, watch, till light,
Upon those chimney-stacks and roofs,
Give, through my window-pane, gray proofs
That Easter-day is breaking slow.
On such a night three years ago,
It chanced that I had cause to cross
The common, where the chapel was,
Our friend spoke of, the other day —
You 've not forgotten, I dare say.
I fell to musing of the time
So close, the blessed matin-prime
All hearts leap up at, in some guise —
One could not well do otherwise.
Insensibly my thoughts were bent
Toward the main point; I overwent
Much the same ground of reasoning
As you and I just now. One thing
Remained, however — one that tasked
My soul to answer; and I asked,

Fairly and frankly, what might be
That History, that Faith, to me
— Me there — not me in some domain
Built up and peopled by my brain,
Weighing its merits as one weighs
Mere theories for blame or praise,
— The kingcraft of the Lucumons,
Or Fourier's scheme, its pros and cons, —
But my faith there, or none at all.
"How were my case, now, did I fall
Dead here, this minute — should I lie
Faithful or faithless?" Note that I
Inclined thus ever! — little prone
For instance, when I lay alone
In childhood, to go calm to sleep
And leave a closet where might keep
His watch perdue some murderer
Waiting till twelve o'clock to stir,
As good authentic legends tell:
"He might: but how improbable!
How little likely to deserve
The pains and trial to the nerve
Of thrusting head into the dark!" —
Urged my old nurse, and bade me mark
Beside, that, should the dreadful scout
Really lie hid there, and leap out
At first turn of the rusty key,
Mine were small gain that she could see,
Killed not in bed but on the floor,
And losing one night's sleep the more.
I tell you, I would always burst
The door ope, know my face at first.
This time, indeed, the closet penned
No such assassin: but a friend
Rather, peeped out to guard me, fit

For counsel, Common Sense, to wit,
Who said a good deal that might pass, —
Heartening, impartial too, it was,
Judge else: "For, soberly now, — who
Should be a Christian if not you?"
(Hear how he smoothed me down.) "One takes
A whole life, sees what course it makes
Mainly, and not by fits and starts —
In spite of stoppage which imparts
Fresh value to the general speed.
A life, with none, would fly indeed:
Your progressing is slower — right!
We deal with progress and not flight.
Through baffling senses passionate,
Fancies as restless, — with a freight
Of knowledge cumbersome enough
To sink your ship when waves grow rough,
Though meant for ballast in the hold, —
I find, 'mid dangers manifold,
The good bark answers to the helm
Where faith sits, easier to o'erwhelm
Than some stout peasant's heavenly guide,
Whose hard head could not, if it tried,
Conceive a doubt, nor understand
How senses hornier than his hand
Should 'tice the Christian off his guard.
More happy! But shall we award
Less honor to the hull which, dogged
By storms, a mere wreck, waterlogged,
Masts by the board, her bulwarks gone
And stanchions going, yet bears on, —
Than to mere life-boats, built to save,
And triumph o'er the breaking wave?
Make perfect your good ship as these,
And what were her performances!"

I added — "Would the ship reach home!
I wish indeed 'God's kingdom come — '
The day when I shall see appear
His bidding, as my duty, clear
From doubt! And it shall dawn, that day,
Some future season; Easter may
Prove, not impossibly, the time —
Yes, that were striking — fates would chime
So aptly! Easter-morn, to bring
The Judgment! — deeper in the spring
Than now, however, when there 's snow
Capping the hills; for earth must show
All signs of meaning to pursue
Her tasks as she was wont to do
— The skylark, taken by surprise
As we ourselves, shall recognize
Sudden the end. For suddenly
It comes; the dreadfulness must be
In that; all warrants the belief —
'At night it cometh like a thief.'
I fancy why the trumpet blows;
— Plainly, to wake one. From repose
We shall start up, at last awake
From life, that insane dream we take
For waking now, because it seems.
And as, when now we wake from dreams,
We laugh, while we recall them, 'Fool,
To let the chance slip, linger cool
When such adventure offered! Just
A bridge to cross, a dwarf to thrust
Aside, a wicked mage to stab —
And, lo ye, I had kissed Queen Mab!'
So shall we marvel why we grudged
Our labor here, and idly judged
Of heaven, we might have gained, but lose!

Lose? Talk of loss, and I refuse
To plead at all! You speak no worse
Nor better than my ancient nurse
When she would tell me in my youth
I well deserved that shapes uncouth
Frighted and teased me in my sleep:
Why could I not in memory keep
Her precept for the evil's cure?
'Pinch your own arm, boy, and be sure
You 'll wake forthwith!' "

XV

And as I said
This nonsense, throwing back my head
With light complacent laugh, I found
Suddenly all the midnight round
One fire. The dome of heaven had stood
As made up of a multitude
Of handbreadth cloudlets, one vast rack
Of ripples infinite and black,
From sky to sky. Sudden there went,
Like horror and astonishment,
A fierce vindictive scribble of red
Quick flame across, as if one said
(The angry scribe of Judgment) "There —
Burn it!" And straight I was aware
That the whole ribwork round, minute
Cloud touching cloud beyond compute,
Was tinted, each with its own spot
Of burning at the core, till clot
Jammed against clot, and spilt its fire
Over all heaven, which 'gan suspire
As fanned to measure equable, —
Just so great conflagrations kill
Night overheard, and rise and sink,

Reflected. Now the fire would shrink
And wither off the blasted face
Of heaven, and I distinct might trace
The sharp black ridgy outlines left
Unburned like network — then, each cleft
The fire had been sucked back into,
Regorged, and out it surging flew
Furiously, and night writhed inflamed,
Till, tolerating to be tamed
No longer, certain rays world-wide
Shot downwardly. On every side
Caught past escape, the earth was lit;
As if a dragon's nostril split
And all his famished ire o'erflowed;
Then, as he winced at his lord's goad,
Back he inhaled: whereat I found
The clouds into vast pillars bound,
Based on the corners of the earth,
Propping the skies at top: a dearth
Of fire i' the violet intervals,
Leaving exposed the utmost walls
Of time, about to tumble in
And end the world.

XVI

I felt begin
The Judgment-Day: to retrocede
Was too late now. "In very deed,"
(I uttered to myself) "that Day!"
The intuition burned away
All darkness from my spirit too:
There, stood I, found and fixed, I knew,
Choosing the world. The choice was made;
And naked and disguiseless stayed,
And unevadable, the fact.

My brain held all the same compact
Its senses, nor my heart declined
Its office; rather, both combined
To help me in this juncture. I
Lost not a second, — agony
Gave boldness: since my life had end
And my choice with it — best defend,
Applaud both! I resolved to say,
"So was I framed by thee, such way
I put to use thy senses here!
It was so beautiful, so near,
Thy world, — what could I then but choose
My part there? Nor did I refuse
To look above the transient boon
Of time; but it was hard so soon
As in a short life, to give up
Such beauty: I could put the cup
Undrained of half its fulness, by;
But, to renounce it utterly,
— That was too hard! Nor did the cry
Which bade renounce it, touch my brain
Authentically deep and plain
Enough to make my lips let go.
But Thou, who knowest all, dost know
Whether I was not, life 's brief while,
Endeavoring to reconcile
Those lips (too tardily, alas)!
To letting the dear remnant pass,
One day, — some drops of earthly good
Untasted! Is it for this mood,
That Thou, whose earth delights so well,
Hast made its complement a hell?"

XVII

A final belch of fire like blood
Overbroke all heaven in one flood
Of doom. Then fire was sky, and sky
Fire, and both, one brief ecstasy,
Then ashes. But I heard no noise
(Whatever was) because a voice
Beside me spoke thus, "Life is done,
Time ends, Eternity 's begun,
And thou art judged for evermore."

XVIII

I looked up; all seemed as before;
Of that cloud-Tophet overhead
No trace was left: I saw instead
The common round me, and the sky
Above, stretched drear and emptily
Of life. 'T was the last watch of night,
Except what brings the morning quite;
When the armed angel, conscience-clear,
His task nigh done, leans o'er his spear
And gazes on the earth he guards,
Safe one night more through all its wards,
Till God relieve him at his post.
"A dream — a waking dream at most!"
(I spoke out quick, that I might shake
The horrid nightmare off, and wake.)
"The world gone, yet the world is here?
Are not all things as they appear?
Is Judgment past for me alone?
— And where had place the great white throne?
The rising of the quick and dead?
Where stood they, small and great? Who read
The sentence from the opened book?"

So, by degrees, the blood forsook
My heart, and let it beat afresh;
I knew I should break through the mesh
Of horror, and breathe presently:
When, lo, again, the voice by me!

XIX

I saw . . . Oh brother, 'mid far sands
The palm-tree-cinctured city stands,
Bright-white beneath, as heaven, bright-blue,
Leans o'er it, while the years pursue
Their course, unable to abate
Its paradisal laugh at fate!
One morn, — the Arab staggers blind
O'er a new tract of death, calcined
To ashes, silence, nothingness, —
And strives, with dizzy wits, to guess
Whence fell the blow. What if, 'twixt skies
And prostrate earth, he should surprise
The imaged vapor, head to foot,
Surveying, motionless and mute,
Its work, ere, in a whirlwind rapt
It vanish up again? — So hapt
My chance. HE stood there. Like the smoke
Pillared o'er Sodom, when day broke, —
I saw Him. One magnific pall
Mantled in massive fold and fall
His head, and coiled in snaky swathes
About His feet: night's black, that bathes
All else, broke, grizzled with despair,
Against the soul of blackness there.
A gesture told the mood within —
That wrapped right hand which based the chin,
That intense meditation fixed
On His procedure, — pity mixed

With the fulfilment of decree.
Motionless, thus, He spoke to me,
Who fell before His feet, a mass,
No man now.

XX

"All is come to pass.
Such shows are over for each soul
They had respect to. In the roll
Of Judgment which convinced mankind
Of sin, stood many, bold and blind,
Terror must burn the truth into:
Their fate for them! — thou hadst to do
With absolute omnipotence,
Able its judgments to dispense
To the whole race, as every one
Were its sole object. Judgment done,
God is, thou art, — the rest is hurled
To nothingness for thee. This world,
This finite life, thou has preferred,
In disbelief of God's plain word,
To heaven and to infinity.
Here the probation was for thee,
To show thy soul the earthly mixed
With heavenly, it must choose betwixt.
The earthly joys lay palpable, —
A taint, in each, distinct as well;
The heavenly flitted, faint and rare,
Above them, but as truly were
Taintless, so, in their nature, best.
Thy choice was earth: thou didst attest
'T was fitter spirit should subserve
The flesh, than flesh refine to nerve
Beneath the spirit's play. Advance
No claim to their inheritance

Who chose the spirit's fugitive
Brief gleams, and yearned, 'This were to live
Indeed, if rays, completely pure
From flesh that dulls them, could endure, —
Not shoot in meteor-light athwart
Our earth, to show how cold and swart
It lies beneath their fire, but stand
As stars do, destined to expand,
Prove veritable worlds, our home!'
Thou saidst, —'Let spirit star the dome
Of sky, that flesh may miss no peak,
No nook of earth, — I shall not seek
Its service further!' Thou art shut
Out of the heaven of spirit; glut
Thy sense upon the world: 't is thine
Forever — take it!"

XXI

"How? Is mine,
The world?" (I cried, while my soul broke
Out in a transport.) "Hast Thou spoke
Plainly in that? Earth's exquisite
Treasures of wonder and delight,
For me?"

XXII

The austere voice returned, —
"So soon made happy? Hadst thou learned
What God accounteth happiness,
Thou wouldst not find it hard to guess
What hell may be his punishment
For those who doubt if God invent
Better than they. Let such men rest
Content with what they judged the best.
Let the unjust usurp at will:

The filthy shall be filthy still:
Miser, there waits the gold for thee!
Hater, indulge thine enmity!
And thou, whose heaven self-ordained
Was, to enjoy earth unrestrained,
Do it! Take all the ancient show!
The woods shall wave, the rivers flow,
And men apparently pursue
Their works, as they were wont to do,
While living in probation yet.
I promise not thou shalt forget
The past, now gone to its account;
But leave thee with the old amount
Of faculties, nor less nor more,
Unvisited, as heretofore,
By God's free spirit, that makes an end.
So, once more, take thy world! Expend
Eternity upon its shows,
Flung thee as freely as one rose
Out of a summer's opulence,
Over the Eden-barrier whence
Thou art excluded. Knock in vain!"

XXIII

I sat up. All was still again.
I breathed free: to my heart, back fled
The warmth. "But, all the world!" — I said.
I stooped and picked a leaf of fern,
And recollected I might learn
From books, how many myriad sorts
Of fern exist, to trust reports,
Each as distinct and beautiful
As this, the very first I cull.
Think, from the first leaf to the last!
Conceive, then, earth's resources! Vast

Exhaustless beauty, endless change
Of wonder! And this foot shall range
Alps, Andes, — and this eye devour
The bee-bird and the aloe-flower?

XXIV

Then the voice, "Welcome so to rate
The arras-folds that variegate
The earth, God's antechamber, well!
The wise, who waited there, could tell
By these, what royalties in store
Lay one step past the entrance-door.
For whom, was reckoned, not too much,
This life's munificence? For such
As thou, — a race, whereof scarce one
Was able, in a million,
To feel that any marvel lay
In objects round his feet all day;
Scarce one, in many millions more,
Willing, if able, to explore
The secreter, minuter charm!
— Brave souls, a fern-leaf could disarm
Of power to cope with God's intent, —
Or scared if the south firmament
With north-fire did its wings refledge!
All partial beauty was a pledge
Of beauty in its plenitude:
But since the pledge sufficed thy mood,
Retain it! plenitude be theirs
Who looked above!"

XXV

Though sharp despairs
Shot through me, I held up, bore on.
"What matter though my trust were gone

From natural things? Henceforth my part
Be less with nature than with art!
For art supplants, gives mainly worth
To nature; 't is man stamps the earth —
And I will seek his impress, seek
The statuary of the Greek,
Italy's painting — there my choice
Shall fix!"

XXVI

"Obtain it!" said the voice,
" — The one form with its single act,
Which sculptors labored to abstract,
The one face, painters tried to draw,
With its one look, from throngs they saw.
And that perfection in their soul,
These only hinted at? The whole,
They were but parts of? What each laid
His claim to glory on? — afraid
His fellow-men should give him rank
By mere tentatives which he shrank
Smitten at heart from, all the more,
That gazers pressed in to adore!
'Shall I be judged by only these?'
If such his soul's capacities,
Even while he trod the earth, — think, now,
What pomp in Buonarroti's brow,
With its new palace-brain where dwells
Superb the soul, unvexed by cells
That crumbled with the transient clay!
What visions will his right hand's sway
Still turn to forms, as still they burst
Upon him? How will he quench thirst,
Titanically infantine,
Laid at the breast of the Divine?

Does it confound thee, — this first page
Emblazoning man's heritage? —
Can this alone absorb thy sight,
As pages were not infinite, —
Like the omnipotence which tasks
Itself to furnish all that asks
The soul it means to satiate?
What was the world, the starry state
Of the broad skies, — what, all displays
Of power and beauty intermixed,
Which now thy soul is chained betwixt, —
What else than needful furniture
For life's first stage? God's work, be sure,
No more spreads wasted, than falls scant!
He filled, did not exceed, man's want
Of beauty in this life. But through
Life pierce, — and what has earth to do,
Its utmost beauty's appanage,
With the requirement of next stage?
Did God pronounce earth 'very good'?
Needs must it be, while understood
For man's preparatory state;
Naught here to heighten nor abate;
Transfer the same completeness here,
To serve a new state's use, — and drear
Deficiency gapes every side!
The good, tried once, were bad, retried
See the enwrapping rocky niche,
Sufficient for the sleep in which
The lizard breathes for ages safe:
Split the mould — and as light would chafe
The creature's new world-widened sense,
Dazzled to death at evidence
Of all the sounds and sights that broke
Innumerous at the chisel's stroke, —

So, in God's eye, the earth's first stuff
Was, neither more nor less, enough
To house man's soul, man's need fulfil.
Man reckoned it immeasurable?
So thinks the lizard of his vault!
Could God be taken in default,
Short of contrivances, by you, —
Or reached, ere ready to pursue
His progress through eternity?
That chambered rock, the lizard's world,
Your easy mallet's blow has hurled
To nothingness forever; so,
Has God abolished at a blow
This world, wherein his saints were pent, —
Who, though found grateful and content,
With the provision there, as thou,
Yet knew he would not disallow
Their spirit's hunger, felt as well, —
Unsated, — not unsatable,
As paradise gives proof. Deride
Their choice now, thou who sit'st outside!"

XXVII

I cried in anguish, "Mind, the mind,
So miserably cast behind,
To gain what had been wisely lost!
Oh, let me strive to make the most
Of the poor stinted soul, I nipped
Of budding wings, else now equipped
For voyage from summer isle to isle!
And though she needs must reconcile
Ambition to the life on ground,
Still, I can profit by late found
But precious knowledge. Mind is best —
I will seize mind, forego the rest,

And try how far my tethered strength
May crawl in this poor breadth and length.
Let me, since I can fly no more,
At least spin dervish-like about
(Till giddy rapture almost doubt
I fly) through circling sciences,
Philosophies and histories
Should the whirl slacken there, then verse,
Fining to music, shall asperse
Fresh and fresh fire-dew, till I strain
Intoxicate, half-break my chain!
Not joyless, though more favored feet
Stand calm, where I want wings to beat
The floor. At least earth's bond is broke!"

XXVIII

Then, (sickening even while I spoke)
"Let me alone! No answer, pray,
To this! I know what Thou wilt say!
All still is earth's, — to know, as much
As feel its truths, which if we touch
With sense, or apprehend in soul,
What matter? I have reached the goal —
'Whereto does knowledge serve!' will burn
My eyes, too sure, at every turn!
I cannot look back now, nor stake
Bliss on the race, for running's sake.
The goal 's a ruin like the rest! —
And so much worse thy latter quest,"
(Added the voice) "that even on earth —
Whenever, in man's soul, had birth
Those intuitions, grasps of guess,
Which pull the more into the less,
Making the finite comprehend
Infinity, — the bard would spend

Such praise alone, upon his craft,
As, when wind-lyres obey the waft,
Goes to the craftsman who arranged
The seven strings, changed them and rechanged –
Knowing it was the South that harped
He felt his song, in singing, warped;
Distinguished his and God's part: whence
A world of spirit as of sense
Was plain to him, yet not too plain,
Which he could traverse, not remain
A guest in: — else were permanent
Heaven on the earth its gleams were meant
To sting with hunger for full light, —
Made visible in verse, despite
The veiling weakness, — truth by means
Of fable, showing while it screens, —
Since highest truth, man e'er supplied,
Was ever fable on outside.
Such gleams made bright the earth an age;
Now the whole sun 's his heritage!
Take up thy world, it is allowed,
Thou who hast entered in the cloud!"

XXIX

Then I — "Behold, my spirit bleeds,
Catches no more at broken reeds, —
But lilies flower those reeds above:
I let the world go, and take love!
Love survives in me, albeit those
I love be henceforth masks and shows,
Not living men and women: still
I mind how love repaired all ill,
Cured wrong, soothed grief, made earth amends
With parents, brothers, children, friends!

Some semblance of a woman yet
With eyes to help me to forget,
Shall look on me; and I will match
Departed love with love, attach
Old memories to new dreams, nor scorn
The poorest of the grains of corn
I save from shipwreck on this isle,
Trusting its barrenness may smile
With happy foodful green one day,
More precious for the pains. I pray, —
Leave to love, only!"

XXX

At the word,
The form, I looked to have been stirred
With pity and approval, rose
O'er me, as when the headsman throws
Axe over shoulder to make end —
I fell prone, letting Him expend
His wrath, while thus the inflicting voice
Smote me. "Is this thy final choice?
Love is the best? 'T is somewhat late!
And all thou dost enumerate
Of power and beauty in the world,
The mightiness of love was curled
Inextricably round about.
Love lay within it and without,
To clasp thee, — but in vain! Thy soul
Still shrunk from Him who made the whole,
Still set deliberate aside
His love! — Now take love! Well betide
Thy tardy conscience! Haste to take
The show of love for the name's sake,
Remembering every moment Who,

Beside creating thee unto
These ends, and these for thee, was said
To undergo death in thy stead
In flesh like thine: so ran the tale.
What doubt in thee could countervail
Belief in it? Upon the ground
'That in the story had been found
Too much love! How could God love so?'
He who in all his works below
Adapted to the needs of man,
Made love the basis of the plan, —
Did love, as was demonstrated:
While man, who was so fit instead
To hate, as every day gave proof, —
Man thought man, for his kind's behoof,
Both could and did invent that scheme
Of perfect love: 't would well beseem
Cain's nature thou wast wont to praise,
Not tally with God's usual ways!"

XXXI

And I cowered deprecatingly —
"Thou Love of God! Or let me die,
Or grant what shall seem heaven almost!
Let me not know that all is lost,
Though lost it be — leave me not tied
To this despair, this corpse-like bride!
Let that old life seem mine — no more —
With limitation as before,
With darkness, hunger, toil, distress:
Be all the earth a wilderness!
Only let me go on, go on,
Still hoping ever and anon
To reach one eve the Better Land!"

XXXII

Then did the form expand, expand —
I knew Him through the dread disguise
As the whole God within His eyes
Embraced me.

XXXIII

When I lived again,
The day was breaking, — the gray plain
I rose from, silvered thick with dew.
Was this a vision? False or true?
Since then, three varied years are spent,
And commonly my mind is bent
To think it was a dream — be sure
A mere dream and distemperature —
The last day's watching: then the night, —
The shock of that strange Northern Light
Set my head swimming, bred in me
A dream. And so I live, you see,
Go through the world, try, prove, reject,
Prefer, still struggling to effect
My warfare; happy that I can
Be crossed and thwarted as a man,
Not left in God's contempt apart,
With ghastly smooth life, dead at heart,
Tame in earth's paddock as her prize.
Thank God, she still each method tries
To catch me, who may yet escape,
She knows, — the fiend in angel's shape!
Thank God, no paradise stands barred
To entry, and I find it hard
To be a Christian, as I said!
Still every now and then my head
Raised glad, sinks mournful — all grows drear
Spite of the sunshine, while I fear

And think, "How dreadful to be grudged
No ease henceforth, as one that 's judged.
Condemned to earth forever, shut
From heaven!"
But Easter-Day breaks! But
Christ rises! Mercy every way
Is infinite, — and who can say?

NOTES

Dramatic Lyrics

Cavalier Tunes. Three rousing songs, rendering to the life the stalwart and confident temper of the uprising for King Charles against the Parliament.

Line 7. *Pym:* John (1584–1643), leader of the Parliament party in every important movement, from the impeachments of Buckingham and Strafford, to the proceedings against their Royal Master.

14. *Hampden:* John (1594–1643), advocate for the people against the king's right to exact the ship-money tax. He took up arms in the civil war, falling in the engagement of Chalgrove Field against Prince Rupert.

15. *Hazelrig:* Sir Arthur, introduced Pym's bill of attainder against Strafford, and was one of the five members Charles tried to impeach in 1642. Died in the Tower, 1661. — *Fiennes:* Nathaniel (1608–1669), a rigid Presbyterian and leading member of Parliament, in special favor with Cromwell. — *Young Harry:* son of the Secretary of State to Charles I., Sir Henry Vane the elder, held views opposed to his father's, and distinguished himself as a Liberal. Beheaded in 1662 on a charge of high treason.

16. *Rupert:* Prince Robert, of Bavaria (1619–1682), son of Elizabeth, daughter of James I. He embraced the cause of his uncle, Charles I., and went to England at the beginning of the civil war, proving himself a brave but imprudent soldier.

II. 16. *Noll's damned troopers:* Oliver Cromwell's own company of horse, noted for their discipline and valor.

The Lost Leader sings with undaunted spirit the sad

desertion of the people's cause by one who had been one of its leaders. Asked if he referred to Wordsworth, Browning wrote, in 1875: "I can only answer, with something of shame and contrition, that I undoubtedly had Wordsworth in my mind — but simply as a model; you know an artist takes one or two striking traits in the features of his 'model' and uses them to start his fancy on a flight which may end far enough from the good man or woman who happens to be sitting for nose and eye. I thought of the great Poet's abandonment of liberalism at an unlucky juncture, and no repaying consequence that I could ever see. But once call my fancy-portrait *Wordsworth* — and how much more ought one to say!" Wordsworth, liberal in his youth, grew conservative with advancing years, opposed Catholic Emancipation, the Reform Bill, and educational progress.

How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix describes the gallop of three horses with their riders from Ghent at midnight to Aix at midday. Two of the horses falling dead by the way, the good steed Roland is left alone to reach the goal and save Aix. In answer to inquiries Browning wrote: "There is no sort of historical foundation about 'Good News from Ghent.' I wrote it under the bulwark of a vessel off the African coast, after I had been at sea long enough to appreciate even the fancy of a gallop on the back of a certain good horse 'York,' then in my stable at home. It was written in pencil on the flyleaf of Bartoli's 'Simboli,' I remember." It has, however, been pointed out by several commentators that the poem may be said to have a sort of historical background, as such an incident might easily have grown out of the event of the "Pacification of Ghent," a treaty of union entered into by Holland, Zealand, and the southern Netherlands, headed by William of Orange, and directed against the tyrannical power of Philip II. of Spain. (See Motley's "Rise of the United Netherlands," vol. viii.)

"The 'horse without peer' might possibly have gal-

loped the ninety-odd miles between Ghent and Aix, but the feat would be a marvellous one.

"**10.** *Pique:* the pommel of the saddle. We state this on authority of an army officer, although the meaning is in none of the dictionaries.

"**14.** *Lokeren:* a town twelve miles from Ghent, in a direction a little north of east.

"**15.** *Boom:* sixteen miles due east from Lokeren.

"**16.** *Duffeld:* or Duffel, is about twelve miles east of Boom, and a few miles north of Mechlin.

"**17.** *Mecheln:* the contracted form of *Mechelen*, the Flemish form of *Mechlin* (French, *Malines*). The *church steeple* is the lofty (324 feet) though unfinished tower of the Cathedral of St. Rombold. Like many of the great Belgian churches, it is noted for its chimes.

"**18.** *Aerschot:* all the editions spell the name *Aershot;* but the *sch* is pronounced like *sk.* The town is fifteen miles from Duffel.

"**31.** *Hasselt:* the capital of the province of Limbourg. It is about twenty-four miles from Aerschot, and almost eighty from Ghent by the route described. Dirck had, indeed, 'galloped bravely.'

"**38.** *Looz:* this town is seven or eight miles due *south* from Hasselt, and *Tongres* is also out of the direct road to Aix-la-Chapelle. We should expect the riders to take the route *via* Maastricht. By rail it is forty-one miles from Hasselt to Aix, and the highway cannot be much less.

"**41.** *Dalhem:* apparently some village near Aix. It cannot be the frontier-town Dalheim, for that lies too far to the north. The *dome-spire* is probably the cupola of the 'octagon' of the cathedral, built by Charlemagne and containing his tomb." — *Rolfe and Hersey's Notes.*

Through the Metidja to Abd-el-Kadr describes the ride of an Arab insurgent through the Algerian plain called the Metidja to rejoin his chief, Abd-el-Kadr. The leap of his blood quickens his insight, makes him proud of his loyalty to his leader, defiant of witnesses,

exultant over the visions he has of the French who came boasting to the desert, to remain there slain, their dead bodies seeming to be uncovered by the shifting sands he leaves behind him as he rides past on his unspurred horse towards the fate he refuses to pry into, content to accept death when Mohammed pleases. — *Abd-el-Kadr:* ("servant of God"), born 1807, united the Arab tribes to resist the French invasions of their country, made himself recognized as the Emir of Mascara, and forced the French to offer terms of peace. War breaking out again, and the French being again defeated, a larger force was sent into Algeria. The incident of the poem follows the seizure of the emir's camp, in 1842, by the Duc d'Aumale, when several thousand prisoners were taken, Abd-el-Kadr himself escaping with difficulty and collecting the Arabs for renewed resistance. He was forced later to give himself up, and was imprisoned at Pau until 1852, when Louis Napoleon freed him on condition that he did not return to Algeria. He died in 1883.

38. *The Prophet and the Bride:* Mohammed and Ayesha, of whom Mohammed said that she was not only his wife in this world but equally so in the world to come.

Nationality in Drinks. Claret, the favorite wine of France, calls up the gay French lady, a picture typical of the country, a fitting incident in connection with whom is invented to stand in comparison with what really happened to the Claret-flask when it was tossed into the pond. — Tokay, the stronger wine of Hungary, similarly calls up a picture typical of that country, — the stout and intrepid castle warder, who is brought into relation with the squat bottle by being described as "dwarfish" and "hump-shouldered." — When Beer is the drink, the great English naval hero, Nelson, is the befitting type; his health is drunk, while the captain recalls an incident said to be true of him.

29. *Nelson:* (1758–1805), England's greatest naval

hero, who by his victory in Egypt over the French fleet (the battle of the Nile), August, 1798, gave ascendancy to the English navy. In his last great victory over the French and Spanish fleets off Cape Trafalgar, he was killed.

Garden Fancies. I. "The Flower's Name" gives the reveries of a would-be lover as he walks through a garden he had lately visited, recalling every little act of the girl who accompanied him, and feeling the subtle influence of her presence in the flower she pointed out to him, especially the one with the soft meandering Spanish name which he would have stay forever as it was when she touched it. II. "Sibrandus Schafnaburgensis" shows how different the mood induced by a pedantic old book from that by a charming girl. She glorifies nature; but nature's only use in this poem is to bury out of sight the tiresome old pedant, and torment him with its romping and frisking, while the hero of the occasion forgets both in ministering to his material welfare, and to his frivolous mental mood with Rabelais. In a sober moment he repents of his unkindness to the pedant, and gives him at least space on his book-shelf if not in his admiration.

10. *Arbute:* probably arbutus, an ornamental shrub of the Heath family. — *Laurustine:* Viburnum Tinus, an evergreen shrub of the Honeysuckle family.

19. *Pont-levis:* drawbridge.

38. *De profundis, accentibus lætis, cantate:* From the depths with joyful accents sing.

Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister gives the ill-natured attitude of mind of a monk, jealous of a brother monk, whom he hates because of his genial nature and goodness, his simple interest in natural life, and his neglect of those superstitious forms upon the observance of which the ill-natured monk especially congratulates himself.

10. *Salve tibi:* Hail to thee.

39. *Arian:* one who adheres to the doctrines of Arius,

a presbyter of the Church in the fourth century, who held Christ to be a created being, inferior to God the Father in nature and dignity, though the first and noblest of created beings.

49. *There 's a great text in Galatians:* Dr. Berdoe writes: "The great *text* I take to be the tenth verse of the third chapter: 'For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."' 'It is written,' — that is to say, in the Book of Deuteronomy, xxviii. 15–68, wherein are set forth at length the curses for disobedience. Those arithmetically minded commentators on this poem, who have been disappointed in finding only some seventeen works of the flesh in Galatians v. 19–21, will find an abundant opportunity for their discrimination in the chapter of Deuteronomy to which I refer. The question to settle is 'the twenty-nine distinct damnations.' Saint James says in his epistle (ii. 10) that 'he who offends against the law in one point is guilty of all.' If, therefore, the envious monk could induce his brother to trust to his works instead of to his faith, he would fall under the condemnation of the law, as explained by Saint Paul in his epistle."

56. *Manichee:* a follower of Manes, a Persian, who tried to combine the Oriental philosophy with Christianity, and maintained that there are two supreme principles, — light, the author of all good, and darkness, the author of all evil.

71. *Plena gratiâ, Ave, Virgo!* Full of grace, Hail, Virgin — a slight change of *Ave Maria gratia plena,* demanded by the exigencies of rhyme and metre.

The Laboratory presents, as an episode in the course of a ball, the scene and agents of a jealous woman's preparation to poison her rival, the social and scientific conditions of the feudal period being illustrated by this glimpse of a laboratory dim with arsenic fumes, of the

fierce, chattering little lady peering through her protecting glass mask, and the morose old alchemist including a kiss in his pay.

The Confessional. In indignation and rage at the wrong done her, a girl denounces the teaching of the Church, because she has been inveigled in the confessional into giving political information in regard to her lover, which has led to his execution. Herself imprisoned and tortured on account of her denunciations, she yet vows that the world shall hear and listen to her.

Cristina expresses the eternal character of the love awakened by a look, and the lover's sense of the worth of love to the soul as the supreme gain of life. Though Cristina's half of the rapture be quenched in worldly honors, his remains forever blent with hers to his spiritual enrichment. Cristina, daughter of Francis I. of Naples, born 1806, handsome and a coquette, married Ferdinand VII., King of Spain, 1829; became regent on his death, 1833, till her daughter Isabel II. took the throne, 1843.

The Lost Mistress is the farewell of a lover who seeks, with a good grace, to suppress his love to the level of that mere friendship whose privileges he must resign, but whose tenderness he transcends.

Earth's Immortalities. A two-fold lyric singing Time's power over Fame and Love. The touch of Time upon a poet's grave symbolizes the one, Time's deafness to the human outcry against old age and the progress of the seasons typifies the other.

Meeting at Night and **Parting at Morning.** Supplementary pictures of a love-tryst, one giving the lover's impressions in turning at night towards isolation with the loved one, the other of the return to the larger needs and uses of the world at sunrise. Whether the man speaks throughout, or the woman speaks in the second part, are open questions.

Song reflects the mood of a lover who in his own infat-

uation imagines every one else must see his mistress as he sees her and praise her as he thinks she should be praised, though the intensity of his emotion prevents him from doing it himself.

A Woman's Last Word implies a dramatic situation, — a resistance of soul and intellect against overmastery, and gives lyrical expression to the outcome of the struggle, — the self-surrender of a fond heart.

Evelyn Hope expresses a lover's faith in the potency of love to reward love, overcoming Death and Time, and making itself understood, at last, by the young girl who dies unconscious of the secret he shuts within the keeping of her cold hand.

Love among the Ruins. A lover, meditating, draws a contrast showing how the ruined spot where he and the beloved one meet — "The single little turret that remains on the plains" from which kings were once wont to look forth — is more glorified by the perfect love existing between them than it has ever been in the past when the ancient city stood there with all its pomp of triumph and war, its folly and noise and sin.

21. *Hundred-gated circuit of a wall:* the poet perhaps had in mind Homer's description of Thebes as the "hundred-gated" city. Rome never had more than twenty (or possibly a few over twenty) gates. Homer's epithet evidently applied to the gates of the temple, as Thebes was not a walled city.

A Lovers' Quarrel is a lover's protest against any severance of the union in whose endless pleasures his memory revels. His sudden word that unwittingly struck discord into their happy world must be too slight to blot out the love that amassed them such memories and experiences of each other.

123. *Minor third:* see "A Toccata of Galuppi," p. 369.

Up at a Villa — Down in the City. A humorous portraiture of a pleasure-loving Italian nobleman who contrasts the boredom of life in the country with the ex-

citements of town-life, and sighs over the expense of the city which condemns him to his rustic villa.

52. *Seven swords:* figurative of the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady, and contrasting naïvely with the pink gauze and spangles.

56. *Tax upon salt . . . oil pays passing the gate:* Italy's system of revenue included a tax on salt, and the *octroi*, or town dues, must be paid on all provisions entering the city-gates.

A Toccata of Galuppi's. Here is shown the power of music to call up a vision of the times which gave it birth. It has lost all possibility of direct personal appeal, because it is not the outcome of an age marked by deep and universal feeling, and its very coldness makes more vivid the picture of soulless frivolity of the Venice of the composer's day. To his contemporaries it spoke only of death, and so to the poet it not only reflects its own age, but is in its deadness a lasting monument of the "dust and ashes" into which the shallow life of Venice vanished.

1. *Galuppi, Baldassaro:* (1706–1785), an Italian musician, famous in his day, an industrious composer, of whose seventy operas none have survived. He lived and worked in London from 1741 to 1744; also in Russia at the court of the Empress Catherine II. till 1768, when he became organist of Saint Mark's, Venice. On his death, he left fifty thousand lire to the poor of that city.

6. *Saint Mark's:* the great cathedral of Venice named for Saint Mark, because it is said that the body of that evangelist was brought to Venice and enshrined there. — *Where the Doges used to wed the sea with rings:* "The ceremony of wedding the Adriatic was instituted in 1174 by Pope Alexander III., who gave the Doge a gold ring from his own finger in token of the victory achieved by the Venetian fleet at Istria over Frederick Barbarossa, in defence of the Pope's quarrel. When his Holiness gave the ring, he desired the Doge to throw a similar

Ring into the sea annually, in commemoration of the event" (Brewer).

8. *Shylock's bridge:* probably the Rialto bridge, by which they show Shylock's house.

18. *Toccatas:* the name "toccata" is derived from the Italian *toccari*, "to touch." It is a piece in which a certain passage or figure is repeated over and over again, either in the strict or the free style. — *Clavichord:* a keyed and stringed instrument, one of the forerunners of the modern piano. The technical musical allusions in the poem are all to be found in the 7th, 8th, and 9th stanzas. The *lesser thirds* (**19**) are minor thirds (intervals containing three semitones), and are of common occurrence, but the diminished sixth (**19**) is an interval rarely used. Ordinarily a *diminished sixth* (seven semitones), exactly the same interval as a perfect fifth, instead of giving a plaintive, mournful, or minor impression, would suggest a feeling of rest and satisfaction. There is one way, however, in which it can be used, — as a suspension, in which the root of the chord on the *lowered* super-tonic of the scale is suspended from above into the chord with added seventh on the super-tonic, making a diminished sixth between the root of the first and the third of the second chord. The effect of this progression is most dismal, and possibly Browning had it in mind. — *Suspensions* (**20**) are notes which are held over from one chord into another, and must be made according to certain strict musical rules. This holding over of a note always produces a dissonance, and must be followed by a concord, — in other words, a *solution.* Sevenths are very important dissonances in music, and a *commiserating seventh* (**21**) is most likely the variety called a minor seventh. Being a somewhat less mournful interval than the lesser thirds and the diminished sixths, whether real or imaginary, yet not as final as "those solutions" which seem to put an end to all uncertainty, and therefore to life, they arouse in the listeners to Galuppi's playing a hope that life may last,

although in a sort of dissonantal, Wagnerian fashion. The "commiserating sevenths" are closely connected with the "dominant's persistence" (24). The dominant chord in music is the chord written on the fifth degree of the scale and it almost always has a seventh added to it, and in a large percentage of cases is followed by the tonic, the chord on the first degree of the scale. Now, in fugue form a theme is first presented in the tonic key, then the same theme is repeated in the dominant key, the latter being called the answer; after some development of the theme the fugue comes to what is called an episode, after this the theme is presented first, in the dominant. "Hark! the dominant's persistence" alludes to this musical fact; but according to rule this dominant must be answered in the tonic an octave above the first presentation of the theme, and "So an octave struck the answer." Thus the inexorable solution comes in after the dominant's persistence. Although life seemed possible with commiserating sevenths, the tonic, a resistless fate, strikes the answer that all must end. The use of these terms belonging to the fugue form indicate that this particular Toccata was strict rather than free in form.

Old Pictures in Florence is a plea for the catholic appreciation of all exponents and schools of art as related parts in the whole plan of man's soul-growth, and, especially, for the due praise of those early painters whose decaying work is still unapprehended, yet who were the pioneers in the development of the perfected art of the great Italian Masters. This is expressed in the soliloquy of an art-critic whose delight in Giotto's bell-tower, aspiring above the beauty of Florence on a certain warm March morning, provokes these thoughts, also the reproaches he sportively addresses to the ghosts of the artists he is alone in understanding that they have not helped him to ferret out their lost art treasures. Even his adored Giotto has let another discover a "certain precious little tablet" he will not yet give up

hoping to secure, and in anticipation of which he closes his musings with a prophecy of Florence freed from the Austrian yoke, celebrating her liberty by no noisy demonstration, but by carrying on Giotto's unfinished work.

15. *Bell-tower Giotto raised:* the Campanile of Santa Maria in Florence, founded 1334, from designs and models of Giotto's which were his last public work.

64. *Da Vincis derive . . . from Dellos:* Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), representing the fullest scope of artistic power; Niccolo Dello, who painted cassoni, in the style of the bird-painter Uccelli, with careful perspective, representing the power of art in little.

69. *Stefano:* a pupil of Giotto's, called the "Ape of Nature" for his improved color and softness.

98. *Sit like Theseus:* as represented in the sculptures from the Parthenon now in the British Museum.

99. *Son of Priam:* the Paris of the Ægina sculptures, kneeling and drawing a bow, now in the Munich Glyptothek.

101. *Slay your snake like Apollo:* on this Browning writes: "A word on the line about Apollo the snake-slayer, which my friend Professor Colvin condemns, believing that the God of the Belvedere grasps no bow, but the Ægis, as described in the 15th Iliad. Surely the text represents that portentous object (*θοῦριν, δεινὴν, ἀμφιδάσειαν, ἀριπρεπέ — μαρμαρέην*) as 'shaken violently' or 'held immovably' by both hands, not a single one, and that the left hand:

> *ἀλλὰ σύ γ' ἐν χείρεσσι λάβ' αἰγίδα θυσανόεσσαν*
> *τὴν μὰλ' ἐπισσείων φοβέειν ἥρωας Ἀχαιούς,*

and so on, *τὴν ἄρ' ὅ γ' ἐν χείρεσσιν ἔχων — χερσὶν ἔχ' ἀτρέμα κ. τ. λ.* Moreover, while he shook it he 'shouted enormously,' *σεῖσ', ἐπὶ δ' αὐτὸς ἄϋσε μάλα μέγα*, which the statue does not. Presently when Teukros, on the other side, plies the bow, it is *τόξον ἔχων ἐν χειρὶ παλίντονον.* Besides, by the act of discharging an arrow, the right

arm and hand are thrown back as we see: a quite gratuitous and theatrical display in the case supposed. The conjecture of Flaxman that the statue was suggested by the bronze Apollon Alexikakos of Kalamis, mentioned by Pausanias, remains probable, — though the 'hardness' which Cicero considers to distinguish the artist's workmanship from that of Muron is not by any means apparent in our marble copy, if it be one." — R. B., Feb. 16, 1880.

102. *Niobe's the grander:* the sculptured Niobe mourning for her children, now in the Uffizi, Florence.

103. *Racers' Fricze:* from the Parthenon.

104. *Dying Alexander:* the sculptured head, so called, now in Florence.

134. *Thy one work . . . done at a stroke:* when the envoy of Benedict IX., visiting Giotto, asked for a drawing to carry as a proof of his skill to that Pope, Giotto took a sheet of paper and a brushful of red paint, and resting his elbow on his hip, to form a sort of compass, with one turn of his hand drew a circle so perfect that it was a marvel to behold, whence the proverb "Rounder than the O of Giotto."

179. *Nicolo:* (1207–1278) and *Cimabue* (1240–1302), Giotto's teacher, pioneers both of a more natural art.

182. *Ghiberti:* Lorenzo (1381–1455), and *Ghirlandajo* or Domenico Bigordi, *the great Bigordi*, line **201** (1449–1494).

198. *Dree:* endure, Anglo-Saxon *dreógan.*

202. *Sandro:* Filipepi or Botticelli (1457–1515).

203. *Lippino:* (1460–1505), son of Fra Lippo Lippi, "wronged" because his work was credited to others.

204. *Angelico:* (1387–1455), greatest of monastic painters.

205. *Gaddi:* (1300–1366), Giotto's pupil who carried out his plans for erecting the bell-tower.

206. *Intonaco:* rough plaster cast.

208. *Monaco:* (about 1410), a monastic painter.

210. *Pollajolo:* (1430–1498), first artist to study anatomy.

215. *Baldovinetti:* (1422–1499), distinguished for his minuteness.

217. *Margheritone:* (1236–1313), among the first to show some departure from the Byzantine manner. Crucifix painting was his specialty. His sour expression refers to mixed disdain and despair excited in him by Giotto's innovations, which made him take to his death-bed in vexation. The epithet "poll-clawed parrot" applied to him by Browning seems to be a reminiscence from Shakespeare: 2 Henry IV. ii. 4, 282. The pictures described in stanzas xxvii. and xxviii. Browning possessed.

230. *Calm as Zeno:* the first stoic philosopher.

232. *Carlino:* Carlo Dolci (1616–1686), whose pictures were smoothed into lifelessness.

236. *A certain . . . tablet:* this, Browning wrote Dr. Corson, "was a famous 'Last Supper' mentioned by Vasari, gone astray long ago from the Church of S. Spirito: it turned up, according to report, in some obscure corner, while I was in Florence, and was at once acquired by some stranger. I saw it, genuine or no, a work of great beauty."

242. *Ognissanti:* All Saints Church.

244. *Detur amanti:* Let it be given to the loving one.

245. *Koh-i-noor:* the celebrated diamond, "Mountain of light," presented to Queen Victoria in 1850; the *Jewel of Giamschid*, its only rival, belonging to the King of Persia.

249. *A certain dotard:* Joseph Wenzel Radetzky (1766–1858), governor of Italy for the Austrians. For the allusions in stanza xxxiii. see, as Browning suggests, Mrs. Browning's "Casa Guidi Windows," part i.

260. *Quod videas ante:* "which you may have seen before."

264. *Orgagna:* Andrea (1315–1376), an artist who derived from Giotto, yet without imitation.

271. *Chimæra:* a three-headed monster, "one indeed," says Hesiod, "of a grim-visaged lion, one of a goat, and another of a serpent," — an unnatural birth.

275. *Half-told tale:* Chaucer's unfinished story of Cambuscan in the "Squire's Tale."

277. *Beccaccia:* woodcock.

279. *Fifty braccia:* the Campanile, as Giotto planned it, was to have been crowned by a spire fifty braccia (cubits) high.

"De Gustibus — " for tastes — "De Gustibus non disputandum" — there is no accounting. Illustrative of likings inherent in each person, perhaps persistent in each ghost; for the tree-lover, rusticity, and a congenial train of English sights and sounds and scenes of youthful love-making, from which the ghostly self must stay in shadow; for the speaker, if he gets loose from his grave, scenes rich in complex human associations, Italy, the old-world life, the sea, and the stir of civic events.

Home-Thoughts, from Abroad expresses the longing for home of one who when spring comes remembers the joyous, dainty beauties of the English spring. The gaudy melon flower at hand, symbolic of the rankness of a southern spring is dull in comparison with the gay buttercups that little children love.

Home-Thoughts, from the Sea. Being in the neighborhood of Trafalgar and Gibraltar, the poet's home-thoughts are naturally of England's military glory, and the patriotic desire to help her arises. This is open to any one who will praise her and pray for her.

1. *Cape Saint Vincent:* S. W. corner of Spain, the scene of a brilliant victory of Nelson's over the Spanish.

2. *Cadiz Bay:* in which the French and Spanish fleets were drawn up at the Battle of Trafalgar.

3. *Trafalgar:* cape off the southwestern coast of Spain.

4. *Gibraltar:* a fort upon a remarkable rock, which rises to the height of 1,430 feet, and has a length of three miles, projecting southward from the mainland of Spain.

It was captured by the English, under Sir George Rooke, in 1704, and has been retained by them ever since.

7. *Jove's planet:* Jupiter.

Saul — founded on the passage in 1 Samuel xvi. 14–23, where Saul is described as being troubled with an evil spirit — puts into David's mouth the account of his ministry to Saul's great need by means of his music which working upon the memory and emotions of Saul, at last arouses him from his lethargy. First, he sings to him the simpler tunes to the Brutes, then the help-tunes for great epochs in human life. Leading up to the tunes of human aspiration, he sings first of the great joys of life, and then centres his song upon the greatness of Saul's life especially. Seeing that Saul is now fully aroused but not comforted, David sings another song showing that Saul's true greatness does not lie in his mortal life, but in the far-reaching effect of his great deeds. Then, through the intense and self-sacrificing love with which David is inspired for Saul, the prophetic revelation of God as an incarnation of love in Christ is borne in upon him. Yearning to give Saul greater comfort, even the assurance of a future resurrection of life, the Truth comes to him. In nature God has been revealed to him as the Almighty; in his own love God is revealed to him as love, infinitely strong in his power to love and able to accomplish what David only desires to accomplish, but infinitely weak in his power to be loved, through which weakness he shall become incarnate and be the salvation of mankind.

1. *Abner:* the son of Ner, captain of Saul's host (1 Samuel xxvi. 5).

36. *And I first played the tune:* Professor Albert S. Cook suggests that Browning obtained his hints for these tunes from Longus's romance of "Daphnis and Chloe." The first is found on pp. 303–304 (Smith's Translation, Bohn Ed.), "He ran through all variations of pastoral melody, he played the tune which the oxen obey, and which attracts the goats, — that in which the

sheep delight," etc.; pp. 332–334, ". . . standing under the shade of a beech-tree, he took his pipe from his scrip and breathed into it very gently. The goats stood still, merely lifting up their heads. Next he played the pasture tune, upon which they all put down their heads and began to graze. Now he produced some notes soft and sweet in tone; at once his herd lay down. After this he piped in a sharp key, and they ran off to the wood, as if a wolf were in sight." In answer to the question as to whether there is any historical foundation for David's songs, Rabbi Charles Fleischer of Boston replied in a letter to the editors: "I believe that David's songs in Browning's poem 'Saul' are the inspired melodies of our nineteenth-century David rather than the songs of Israel's poetic shepherd-king. . . . While, then, I believe that these melodies in 'Saul' were not current among the Jews of old, I know that they would serve well to express beliefs and ideals characteristic of the best minds among the Jews of to-day."

45. *Jerboa:* a small jumping rodent, called also a jumping hare.

65. *Male-sapphires:* superior. The ancient sapphire was the same as our lapis-lazuli.

203. *Hebron:* the most southern of the three cities of refuge west of Jordan.

204. *Kidron:* a brook in Jerusalem.

My Star. A love lyric, showing how the soul of the loved one reveals itself fully to the sympathetic insight of the lover alone, who, having this revelation, cares nothing if the choice of others be more distinguished.

4. *Angled spar:* a prism of Iceland spar has the property of polarizing or dividing a ray of light into two parts. Suppose this polarized ray be passed through a plate of Iceland spar, at a certain angle, and a second prism of Iceland spar be rotated in front of it, different colors will be given out, complementary tints being ninety degrees apart, and four times during the rotation the light will vanish completely. Some such experiment

as this was probably in the poet's mind when he made the comparison with the angled spar.

By the Fire-side. A mature man's anticipated reminiscence in old age of the scene and the crowning moment of a ripe and perfect love. The initial insight and force to seize the vital moment, fusing the physical and spiritual elements of love and testing the soul and exalting it to the highest potency, is attributed to the "perfect wife," whose "great brow" and "spirit-small hand" clearly refer to Mrs. Browning and give the situation of the poem an autobiographical implication. The scene is placed in a little mountain gorge near the baths of Lucca, where the Brownings passed the summer in 1849 and in 1853. "We have taken a sort of eagle's nest in this place," writes Mrs. Browning, "the highest house of the highest of the three villages which are called the Bagni di Lucca, and which lie at the heart of a hundred mountains sung to continually by a rushing mountain stream. The sound of the river and of the cicale is all the sound we hear. . . . The silence is full of joy and consolation. . . . I find myself able to climb the hills with Robert, and help him to lose himself in the forests."

101. *Leonor:* the name, also, of the devoted wife and heroine in Beethoven's opera of married love, "Fidelio."

Any Wife to any Husband. Another expression of the wife's superior perception of the unity of the physical and spiritual in love, and the psychical value of constancy. Destined to die first, she protests against the husband's wronging their genuine love and his own spiritual dignity by indulging in cheaper attractions he would only put up with in her absence, and she does not dare to prophesy his loyalty.

Two in the Campagna. A sense of elusiveness pervades this poem. The perpetual failure of the mind to realize thought, of the heart to realize the ideal in an earthly passion, leads the yearning human soul towards an infinite which transcends finite power. The Cam-

pagna, "Rome's Ghost," comprises an area round Rome nearly co-extensive with ancient Latium. It is populous with ruined cities and crumbling tombs; a malarial desert in summer; in May, the time of the poem, a rich unbroken pasturage.

Misconceptions sings the lover's flitting moment of joy in a love fully answering his own ere undeceived, like the spray which the bird clung to, he learns that the queen, like the bird, had but casually used his help in order to pass on to a happiness beyond him.

A Serenade at the Villa reflects the mood of the speaker as he calls to mind the scene of his serenade the night before, when, in spite of the thunderous sultry night, and the deadness of nature, he ventured to go forth and sing his devotion to his lady. He wonders whether the lady recognized that here was a friend who would serve her with the utmost devotion to life's end, or whether, as something warns him, she considered the music merely an annoyance that only added to the discomfort of an already unbearable night — an impression evidently due to the inhospitable blackness of her windows, and to his excited imagination reflected in the unfriendliness of the grass in grudging him place to stand and the gate's grinding its teeth as he passed through.

One Way of Love is a "way" so pure and unselfish that though the lover's passion is unrequited he can still see others win heaven without feeling envy.

Another Way of Love is the way of a man known only too well to the speaker, and not uncommon, as she implies, whose expression of boredom with the perfection of June insinuates a like boredom with her love for him which is as perfect as the season. This expression she half playfully resents, and identifying herself with "June" threatens to act as June would to a rude hand that plucked her roses only to deface her bushes, — that is, cure the defacement and either give herself to one capable of appreciating her response or

stop the ravage of "man and of spider" with June's own weapon of lightning — such scorn as shall kill all love.

19. *Eadem semper:* always the same.

A Pretty Woman is a light sketch of a typical pretty woman whose brains and heart are rudimentary, and of the typical treatment she receives from men, who make her their peculiar prize for their cleverness or valor, "a word's sake or a sword's sake." The "Conclusion" to try is, — why crush her for lack of qualities of which she is incapable, or lavish devotion upon her fruitlessly? Rather appreciate her beauty by leaving it unsullied, as its own excuse for being. The Oriental treatment of pretty women is dexterously intimated in the craftsman's way to grace a rose.

Respectability. Two lovers wandering in Paris at night declare that had they belonged to respectable society, many months and years would have been wasted before they found out the hollowness of social conventions and dared to break them, and enjoy the pleasures of personal freedom. An illustration of the falseness of convention is furnished by the coming upon the Institute where Guizot, hating Montalembert because of their opposite views, will yet receive him with pretended courtesy, and they, in the flare of the lights, must also make a pretence of respectability.

22. *Guizot:* the celebrated French writer and politician. He adopted the principles of the Constitutional Royalists (1787–1874). — *Montalembert:* also celebrated as a writer and politician, and a champion of Catholicism united to democracy (1810–1870).

Love in a Life and **Life in a Love** are lyrical expressions, the first of the search for love as an uncertain, undiscovered ideal, the other of the pursuit of love as an ideal that is sure and discovered; the first consisting in the attempt to gain a love within a life, the other in the spending of a life in love's attainment.

In Three Days is a lover's song of expectant joy in

reunion; his eagerness that makes the three days seem long contends with his anticipation of happiness that makes the three days seem short; and fear of change and chance is but a trifle that his perfect faith overrides.

In a Year. A woman's lyric, unconsciously dramatizing her own and her fickle lover's character, and at last through a truer estimate of the worth of his heart getting her own glimpse of the divine quality residing in constancy.

Woman and Roses. A dreamy glimpse of actual woman animating the past, present, and future ideals of woman which are typified in the poet's fancy by the three roses faded, blooming, and just budded, on a rose-tree sent by a friend to Mrs. Browning. He seeks in vain to appropriate the dearest of these ideals. His only hold upon them is through his knowledge of the real womanhood of the woman akin to them who is closest to him. They circle their particular rose on his real rose-tree.

Before and **After.** "Before" is an argument on the part of a third person in favor of two men fighting out a quarrel, on the grounds that the one in the wrong will never acknowledge his guilt, and the wronged one will not forgive as long as there is wrong to be resisted; while if the guilty man lives, life with its ever recurrent reminders of his deed will be constant torment for him, and thus he will be fitly punished, and if the guiltless man dies, he will but have borne one stroke more in the cause of truth and will win heaven. "After" reflects the feelings of the man who survives after the quarrel — the wronged man, who realizes, when it is too late, that death avails naught to erase either offence or disgrace. If only their old days of friendship could be recalled, how easily all might be borne!

The Guardian-Angel describes Guercino's picture through the feeling it awakens in the poet — the craving to take the child's place in it and be nurtured of the angel in the serenity of prayer. The poet, however,

would not look towards heaven as the child does, but gaze contentedly upon the gracious guardian face, and view the world again afterwards, too, but with new eyes. So he now links with his translation of the picture into song thoughts of his own angel (his wife), his friend Alfred (Domett), and the artist's fame. — "A Picture at Fano," *L'Angelo Custode*, in the church of St. Augustine by the Bolognese artist Giovanni Francesco Barbieri, called Guercino (1590–1666).

55. "Wairoa": a river in New Zealand, the country Domett went to. See "Waring."

Memorabilia renders homage to Shelley by signalizing the moment when an unappreciative person's remembrance of him was made known, like a moor blank of interest save for the space where the sign of an eagle's flight was found and prized. — "The eagle feather," says Professor Corson, "causes an isolated flash of association with the poet of the atmosphere, the winds, and the clouds, 'The meteoric poet of air and sea.' "

Popularity draws in symbolical language the portrait of a poet whose genius the world has not yet recognized, but who holds in his hands the appreciation of the future; a poet whose inspirations come direct from his own soul, like the fisherman catching fresh netfuls of Tyrian shells. The critics, learned in the poetic inspirations of the past, do not recognize the same thing when it is caught afresh, though there is enough of the marvellous blue dye (poetic inspiration) to furnish forth beauties never before imagined. "Mere genius in the rough!" they say, not fit to be called art until refined and extracted to but a semblance of its original force by the crowd of imitating poets, who straightway become popular, while he who was their inspiration probably died of starvation.

24. *Tyre:* ancient city of Phœnicia, with great harbors and splended buildings.

26. *Tyrian shells:* the genera *Murex* and *Purpura*

have a gland called the "adrectal gland," which secretes a colorless liquid. It turns purple upon exposure to the atmosphere, and was discovered first by the Phœnicians and used as a dye.

42. *Solomon . . . Cedar-house:* 1 Kings vii.

65. *What porridge had John Keats?* refers, of course, to the lack of contemporary appreciation from which Keats suffered.

Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha. After wrestling with the unmanageable difficulties of a mountainous fugue, likening it to a wordy quarrel over a simple proposition, and seeking for the soul of meaning that inspired Master Hugues when he wrote it, the organist finally decides to regard it as a symbol of life, which, with its play and interplay of human action and thought, ends by obscuring God's truth. Though Hugues may have had no discoverable moral in writing his fugue, the organist draws the moral that truth shines ever above even if it is not always grasped.

2. *Hugues:* an imaginary person.

4. *Mountainous fugues:* a fugue is a composition in parts, the construction of which requires great skill, for it is necessary to start with a theme in the first part that can be repeated in all the other parts and yet harmonize with itself. First the theme or subject is presented in a single part in the tonic key, and is repeated in the second part a fifth higher while the first part continues in counterpoint against it. Then the subject is repeated again at the octave, and then at the fifth and so on. As the fugue progresses, the themes are developed and the intertwisting of parts grows more and more complex. The laws which govern the harmonizing of the parts together are called laws of counterpoint, and form one of the most difficult branches of the art of composition (see note on "A Toccata"). The fugue described in this poem would seem to be one of those mathematical productions of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when music in the hands of the learned musicians had

become little more than an affair of the head. Only with the advent of John Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) did the fugue become a thing of beauty. The fact that the poet has made Hugues from Saxe-Gotha has led to the conclusion that a Bach fugue is meant, because Bach was born in Saxe-Gotha, but the turning of the organist to Palestrina (**140**) as a relief from the gorgon counterpoint of Hugues, would indicate that the poet was thinking of the fugues that preceded Palestrina rather than those of Bach, which belong about a hundred years later than Palestrina (1524–1594), when German music had come under the influence of the Italian style, founded by Palestrina, who freed music from the excesses of the current contrapuntal complications.

26. *Aloys and Jurien and Just:* sacristan's assistants.

39. *Claviers:* the keyboard of the organ.

44. *Two great breves:* the longest note in music, formerly square in shape.

80. *O Danaides, O Sieve!* the Danaides were the daughters of Danaus, who were condemned for their crimes to pour water forever through a sieve.

83. *Escobar:* of Mendoza, a Spanish casuist, the general tendency of whose writings was to find excuses for human frailties.

86. *Est fuga, volvitur rota:* it is a flight, the wheel rolls itself round.

92. *Risposting:* a term in fencing equivalent here to making a repartee.

100. *Ticken:* ticking.

136. *Meâ pœnâ:* at my risk of punishment.

140. *Mode Palestrina:* in the style of Palestrina.

Dramatic Romances

Incident of the French Camp. A story of modest heroism. The incident related is said by Mrs. Orr to be a true one of the siege of Ratisbon by Napoleon in 1809 — except that the real hero was a man.

1. *Ratisbon:* (German Regensburg), an ancient city of Bavaria on the right bank of the Danube, has endured seventeen sieges since the tenth century, the last one being that of Napoleon, 1809.

11. *Lannes:* Duke of Montebello, one of Napoleon's generals.

The Patriot is a hero's story of the reward and punishment dealt him for his services within one year. To act regardless of praise or blame, save God's, seems safer.

My Last Duchess puts in the mouth of a Duke of Ferrara, a typical husband and art patron of the Renaissance, a description of his last wife, whose happy nature and universal kindliness were a perpetual affront to his exacting self-predominance, and whose suppression, by his command, has made the vacancy he is now, in his interview with the envoy for a new match, taking precaution to fill more acceptably.

3. *Frà Pandolf,* and 56. *Claus of Innsbruch,* are imaginary.

Count Gismond: Aix in Provence illustrates, in the person of the woman who relates to a friend an episode of her own life, the power of innate purity to raise up for her a defender when caught in the toils woven by the unsuspected envy and hypocrisy of her cousins and Count Gauthier, who attempt to bring dishonor upon her, on her birthday, with the seeming intention of honoring her. Her faith that the trial by combat between Gauthier and Gismond must end in Gismond's victory and her vindication reflects most truly, as Arthur Symons has pointed out, the mediæval atmosphere of chivalrous France.

124. *Tercel:* a male falcon.

The Boy and the Angel. An imaginary legend illustrating the worth of humble, human love to God, who missed in the praise of the Pope, Theocrite, and of the Angel Gabriel, the precious human quality in the song of the poor boy, Theocrite.

Instans Tyrannus is a despot's confession of one of

his own experiences which showed him the inviolability of the weakest man who is in the right and who can call the spiritual force of good to his aid against the utmost violence or cunning. — "Instans Tyrannus," or the threatening tyrant, suggested by Horace, third Ode in Book III.: —

> "Justum et tenacem proposti virum,
> Non civium ardor prava jubentium,
> Non vultus instantis tyranni," etc.

[The just man tenacious of purpose is not to be turned aside by the heat of the populace nor the brow of the threatening tyrant.]

Mesmerism. With a continuous tension of will, whose unbroken concentration impregnates the very structure of the poem, a mesmerist describes the processes of the act by which he summons shape and soul of the woman he desires; and then reverent perception of the sacredness of the soul awes him from trespassing upon another's individuality.

The Glove gives a transcript from Court life, in Paris, under Francis I. In making Ronsard the mouthpiece for a deeper observation of the meaning of the incident he is supposed to witness and describe than Marot and the rest saw, characteristic differences between these two poets of the time are brought out, the genuineness of courtly love and chivalry is tested, and to the original story of the glove is added a new view of the lady's character; a sketch of her humbler and truer lover, and their happiness; and a pendent scene showing the courtier De Lorges, having won a beauty for his wife, in the ignominious position of assisting the king to enjoy her favors and of submitting to pleasantries upon his discomfiture. The original story as told by Poullain de St. Croix in his *Essais Historiques sur Paris* ran thus: "One day whilst Francis I. amused himself with looking at a combat between his lions, a lady, having let her glove drop, said to De Lorges, 'If you would have me

believe that you love me as much as you swear you do, go and bring back my glove.' De Lorges went down, picked up the glove from amidst the ferocious beasts, returned, and threw it in the lady's face; and in spite of all her advances and cajoleries would never look at her again." Schiller running across this anecdote of St. Croix, in 1797, as he writes Goethe, wrote a poem on it which adds nothing to the story. Leigh Hunt's 'The Glove and the Lions' adds some traits. It characterizes the lady as shallow and vain, with smiles and eyes "which always seem'd the same." She calculates, since "king, ladies, lovers, all look on," that "the occasion is divine" to drop her glove and "prove his love, then look at him and smile;" and after De Lorges has returned and thrown the glove, "but not with love, right in the lady's face," Hunt makes the king rise and swear "rightly done! No love, quoth he, but vanity, sets love a task like that!" This is the material Browning worked on; he makes use of this speech of the king's, but remodels the lady's character wholly, and gives her an appreciative lover, and also a keen-eyed young poet to tell her story afresh and to reveal through his criticism the narrowness of the Court and the Court poets.

12. *Naso:* Ovid. Love of the classics and curiosity as to human nature were both characteristic of Peter Ronsard (1524–1585), at one time page to Francis I., the most erudite and original of French mediæval poets.

45. *Clement Marot:* (1496–1544), Court poet to Francis I. His nature and verse were simpler than Ronsard's and he belonged more peculiarly to his own day.

48. *Versifies David:* Marot was suspected of Protestant leanings which occasioned his imprisonment twice, and put him in need of the protection Francis and his sister gave him. Among his works were sixty-five epistles addressed to grandees, attesting his courtiership, and the paraphrase of forty-nine of the Psalms to which Ronsard alludes.

50. *Illum Juda,* etc.: that lion of the tribe of Judah.

89. *Venienti,* etc.: Meet the coming disease; that is, if evil be anticipated, don't wait till it seizes you, but dare to assure yourself and then forestall it as the lady did.

190. *Theorbo:* an old Italian stringed instrument such as pages used.

Time's Revenges. An author soliloquizes in his garret over the fact that he possesses a friend who loves him and would do anything in his power to serve him, but for whom he cares almost nothing. At the same time he himself loves a woman to such distraction that he counts himself crowned with love's best crown while sacrificing his soul, his body, his peace, and his fame in brooding on his love, while she could calmly decree that he should roast at a slow fire if it would compass her frivolously ambitious designs. Thus his indifference to his friend is avenged by the indifference the lady shows toward him.

46. *The Florentine:* Dante. Used here, seemingly, as a symbol of the highest attainments in poesy, his (the speaker's) reverence for which is so great that he would rather put his cheek under his lady's foot than that poetry should suffer any indignity at his hands; yet in spite of all the possibilities open to him through his enthusiasm for poetry, he prefers wasting his entire energies upon one unworthy of him.

The Italian in England. An Italian patriot who has taken part in an unsuccessful revolt against Austrian dominance, reflects upon the incidents of his escape and flight from Italy to the end that if he ever should have a thought beyond the welfare of Italy, he would wish first for the discomfiture of his enemies and then to go and see once more the noble woman who at the risk of her own life helped him to escape. Though there is no exact historical incident upon which this poem is founded, it has a historical background. The Charles referred to (lines **8, 11, 20, 116, 125**) is Charles Albert,

Prince of Carignano, of the younger branch of the house of Savoy. His having played with the patriot in his youth, as the poem says, is quite possible, for Charles was brought up as a simple citizen in a public school, and one of his chief friends was Alberta Nota, a writer of liberal principles, whom he made his secretary. As indicated in the poem, Charles at first declared himself in sympathy, though in a somewhat lukewarm manner, with the rising led by Santa Rosa against Austrian domination in 1823, and upon the abdication of Victor Emanuel he became regent of Turin. But when the king Charles Felix issued a denunciation against the new government, Charles Albert succumbed to the king's threats and left his friends in the lurch. Later the Austrians marched into the country, Santa Rosa was forced to retreat from Turin, and, with his friends, he who might well have been the very patriot of the poem, was obliged to fly from Italy.

19. *Metternich:* the distinguished Austrian diplomatist and determined enemy of Italian independence.

76. *Tenebræ:* darkness. "The office of matins and lauds, for the three last days in Holy Week. Fifteen lighted candles are placed on a triangular stand, and at the conclusion of each psalm one is put out till a single candle is left at the top of the triangle. The extinction of the other candles is said to figure the growing darkness of the world at the time of the Crucifixion. The last candle (which is not extinguished, but hidden behind the altar for a few moments) represents Christ, over whom Death could not prevail" (Dr. Berdoe).

The Englishman in Italy. A graphic, humorous picture of peasant life on the plain of Sorrento is here presented by an Englishman who tells his memories of various scenes grown familiar to his foreign eyes in order to keep a little peasant girl amused during the gloom of the Scirocco, just as he is entertaining himself in Italy while in his own England another sort of tempest is abroad and men are actually debating in Parliament

the use of abolishing the gloom of a human Scirocco, namely, the misery caused by the Corn-laws.

5. *Scirocco:* a fierce hot wind from Africa crossing the Mediterranean in autumn.

97. *Lasagne:* a kind of macaroni.

162. *Lentisks:* the mastic tree.

199. *Isles of the siren:* the three islands off the coast, one and one-half miles from Crapolla, supposed to be those described in the Odyssey (bk. xii. and xxiii.), where the sirens sang, and referred to by Virgil in Æneid, v. 1125.

250. *Feast of the Rosary:* the anniversary of the battle of Lepanto, where the Turkish fleet was destroyed by the Catholic powers of Europe, and for which victory Our Lady of the Rosary receives annual thanks.

277. *Calvano:* Browning is not sure he used the right name for the great mountain opposite Sorrento.

289. *Corn-laws:* in October, 1845, Sir Robert Peel, England's prime minister, asked his cabinet to concur with him in relieving the people from the duty on corn or grain-stuffs, repealing the law passed in the interest of land-holders by the Parliament of 1815. It excited the stormy opposition to which the poem refers, resulting, however, in the passing of Peel's bill in June, 1846.

In a Gondola is a lyric dialogue between two Venetian lovers who have stolen away in a gondola spite of "the three," "Himself" — perhaps a husband — and "Paul" and "Gian," her brothers, whose vengeance discovers them at the end, but not before their love and danger have moved them to weave a series of lyrical fancies, and led them to a climax of emotion which makes Life so deep a joy that Death is of no account.

"The first stanza was written," writes Browning, "to illustrate Maclise's picture, for which he was anxious to get some line or two. I had not seen it, but from Forster's description, gave it to him in his room, impromptu. . . . When I did see it I thought the

serenade too jolly, somewhat, for the notion I got from Forster, and I took up the subject in my own way."

113. *Lido's . . . graves:* Jewish tombs were there.

127. *Giudecca:* a canal of Venice.

155. *Lory:* a kind of parrot.

186. *Schidone's eager Duke:* an imaginary painting by Bartolommeo Schidone of Modena (1560–1616).

188. *Haste-three-Luke:* the English form of the nickname, *Luca-fà-presto,* given Luca Giordano (1632–1705), a Neapolitan painter, on account of his constantly being goaded on in his work by his penurious and avaricious father.

190. *Castelfranco:* the Venetian painter, Giorgione, called Castelfranco, because born there, 1478, died 1511.

193. *Tizian:* (1477–1516). The pictures are all imaginary, but suggestive of the style of each of these artists.

Waring. In recounting the sudden disappearance from among his friends of a man proud and sensitive, who with fine powers of intellect yet incurred somewhat of disdain because of his failure to accomplish anything permanent, expression is given to the deep regret experienced by his friends now that he has left them, his absence having brought them to a truer realization of his worth. If only Waring would come back, the speaker, at least, would give him the sympathy and encouragement he craved instead of playing with his sensibilities as he had done. Conjectures are indulged in as to Waring's whereabouts. The speaker prefers to think of him as back in London preparing to astonish the world with some great masterpiece in art, music, or literature. Another speaker surprises all by telling how he had seen the "last of Waring" in a momentary meeting at Trieste, but the first speaker is certain that the star of Waring is destined to rise again above their horizon.

1. *Waring:* Alfred Domett (born at Camberwell Grove, Surrey, May 20, 1811), a friend of Browning's,

distinguished as a poet and as a Colonial statesman and ruler. His first volume of poems was published in 1832. Some verses of his in *Blackwood's*, 1837, attracted much attention to him as a rising young poet. In 1841 he was called to the bar, and in 1842 went out to New Zealand among the earliest settlers. There he lived for thirty years, filling several important official positions. His unceremonious departure for New Zealand with no leave-takings was the occasion of Browning's poem, which is said by Mrs. Orr to give a lifelike sketch of Domett's character. His "star" did, however, rise again for his English friends, for he returned to London in 1871. The year following saw the publication of his "Ranolf and Amohia," a New Zealand poem, in the course of which he characterizes Browning as "Subtlest Asserter of the Soul in Song." He met Browning again in London, and was one of the vice-presidents of the London Browning Society. Died Nov. 12, 1877.

15. *I left his arm that night myself:* George W. Cooke points out that in his "Living Authors of England" Thomas Powell describes this incident, the "young author" mentioned being himself: "We have a vivid recollection of the last time we saw him. It was at an evening party, a few days before he sailed from England; his intimate friend, Mr. Browning, was also present. It happened that the latter was introduced that evening for the first time to a young author who had just then appeared in the literary world. This, consequently, prevented the two friends from conversation, and they parted from each other without the slightest idea on Mr. Browning's part that he was seeing his old friend Domett for the last time. Some days after, when he found that Domett had sailed, he expressed in strong terms to the writer of this sketch the self-reproach he felt at having preferred the conversation of a stranger to that of his old associate."

54. *Monstr'-inform'-ingens-horrend-ous:* a slight transposition of part of a line in Virgil describing Poly-

phemus, "*Monstrum horrendum informe ingens,*" a monster horrid, misshapen, huge.

55. *Demoniaco-seraphic:* these two lines form a compound of adjectives humorously used by Browning to express the inferiority of the writers he praised to Waring.

99. *Ichabod:* "Ichabod, the glory is departed." 1 Samuel iv. 21.

122. *Lambwhite maiden:* Iphigenia, who was borne away to Taurus by Diana, when her father, Agamemnon, was about to sacrifice her to obtain favorable winds for his expedition to Troy.

152. *Caldara Polidore:* a celebrated painter, born in Milan, 1492, went to Rome and was employed by Raphael to paint the friezes in the Vatican, was murdered by a servant in Messina, 1543.

155. *Purcell:* an eminent English musician, composer of church music, operas, songs, and instrumental music (1658–1695). — *Rosy Bowers:* one of Purcell's most celebrated songs. " 'From Rosie Bowers' is said to have been set in his last sickness, at which time he seems to have realized the poetical fable of the Swan and to have sung more sweetly as he approached nearer his dissolution, for it seems to us as if no one of his productions was so elevated, so pleasing, so expressive, and throughout so perfect as this" (Rees's Cyclopædia, 1819).

190. *Garrick:* David, an English actor, celebrated especially for his Shakespearian parts (1716–1779).

193. *Junius:* the assumed name of a political writer, who in 1769 began to issue in London a series of famous letters which opposed the ministry in power, and denounced several eminent persons with severe invective and pungent sarcasm.

195. *Some Chatterton shall have the luck of calling Rowley into life:* the chief claim to celebrity of Thomas Chatterton (1752–1770) is the real or pretended discovery of poems said to have been written in the

fifteenth century by Thomas Rowley, a priest of Bristol, and found in Radcliffe church, of which Chatterton's ancestors had been sextons for many years. They are now generally considered Chatterton's own.

The Twins versifies a story told by Martin Luther in his "Table Talk," in which the saying, "Give and it shall be given unto you," is quaintly personified by the Latin words equivalent in meaning, *Date*, "Give," and *Dabitur*, "It-shall-be-given-unto-you."

1. *Martin Luther:* (1483–1546), the leader of the Reformation.

A Light Woman is the story of a dramatic situation brought about by the speaker's intermeddling to save his less sophisticated friend from a light woman's toils. He deflects her interest and wins her heart, and this is the ironical outcome: his friendly, dispassionate act makes him seem to his friend a disloyal passion's slave; his scorn of the light woman teaches him her genuineness, and proves himself lighter than she; his futile assumption of the god manœuvring souls makes the whole story dramatically imply, in a way dear to Browning's heart, the sacredness and worth of each individuality.

The Last Ride Together. The rapture of a rejected lover in the one more last ride which he asks for and obtains, discovers for him the all-sufficing glory of love in itself. Soldiership, statesmanship, art are disproportionate in their results; love can be its own reward, yes, heaven itself.

The Pied Piper of Hamelin. This clever versification of a well-known tale was written for the little son of the actor William Macready. According to Dr. Furnivall, the version used directly by Browning is from "The Wonders of the Little World: or A General History of Man," by Nathaniel Wanley, published in 1678. There are, however, more incidents in common between the poem and the version given by Verstigan in his "Restitution of Decayed Intelligence" (1605). There are many

other sources for the story, and it is not improbable that Browning knew more than one version. Tales similar to it occur also in Persia and China. For its kinship to myths of the wind as a musician, and as a psychopomp or leader of souls, see Baring-Gould, "Curious Myths of the Middle Ages;" John Fiske, "Myths and Myth-makers;" Cox, "Myths of the Aryan Races." — *Hamlin:* or Hamelin, is a town in the province of Hanover, Prussia.

The Flight of the Duchess. A story of the triumph of a free and loving life over a cold and conventional one. The duke's huntsman frees his mind to his friend as to his part in the escape of the gladsome, ardent young duchess from the blighting yoke of a husband whose life consisted in imitating defunct mediæval customs. An old gipsy is the agency that awakens her to the joy and freedom of love. Her mystic chant and charm claim the duchess as the true heir of gipsy blood, thrill her with life, half-hypnotize the huntsman, too, and seem to transform the gipsy crone herself into an Eastern queen. He helps them off, and looks for no better future, when the duke's death releases him, than to travel to the land of the gipsies and hear the last news of his lady.

The poem grew from the fancies aroused in the poet's heart by the snatch of a woman's song he overheard when a boy, — "Following the Queen of the Gipsies, O!"

A Grammarian's Funeral is an elegy of a typical pioneer scholar of the Renaissance period, sung by the leader of the chorus of disciples, and interspersed with parenthetical directions to them, while they all bear the body of their master to its appropriate burial-place on the highest mountain-peak. A humorous sense of disproportion in the labors of devoted scholarship to its results heightens their exaltation of the dead humanist's indomitable trust in the supremacy of the immaterial.

86. *Calculus:* the stone.

88. *Tussis:* a cough.

95. *Hydroptic:* dropsical.

129. *Hoti:* Greek particle Ὅτι, conjunction, that.

130. *Oun:* Greek particle Οὖν, then, now then.

131. *Enclitic De:* Greek Δε, concerning which Browning wrote to the Editor of *The News*, London, Nov. 21, 1874: "In a clever article you speak of 'the doctrine of the enclitic *De*' — 'which, with all deference to Mr. Browning, in point of fact, does not exist.' No, not to Mr. Browning: but pray defer to Herr Buttmann, whose fifth list of 'enclitics' ends 'with the inseparable De,' — or to Curtius, whose fifth list ends also with *De* (meaning '*towards*' and as a demonstrative appendage). That this is not to be confounded with the accentuated '*De*, meaning but,' was the 'Doctrine' which the Grammarian bequeathed to those capable of receiving it."

The Heretic's Tragedy is an Interlude imagined in the manner of the Middle Ages, and typically representing this period of human development in its quaint piety and prejudice, its childish delight in cruelty, and its cumulative legend-making during the course of two centuries as reflected through the Flemish nature. It is supposed to be sung by an abbot, a choir-singer, and a chorus, in celebration of the burning of Jacques du Bourg-Molay, last Grand Master of the wealthy and powerful secular order of Knights Templar, which came into rivalry with the Church after the Crusades and was finally suppressed by Philip IV. of France and Pope Clement V., Molay's burning at Paris in 1314 being a final scene in their discomfiture and the Church's triumph.

8. *Plagal-cadence:* a closing progression of chords in which the sub-dominant or chord on the fourth degree of the scale precedes the tonic or chord on the first degree of the scale. The name arises from the modes used in early church music called Plagal Modes, which were a transposition of the authentic modes beginning on the fourth degree of the authentic modes.

12. *Bought of . . . Aldabrod,* etc.: Clement's arraignment of Jacques or John being that the riches won piously by the order during the Crusades, he had not scrupled to sell again to Saladin, the Sultan, who is portrayed by Scott in "The Talisman."

14. *Pope Clement:* the fifth Clement (1305–1314).

18. *Clavicithern:* a cithern with keys like a harpsichord.

35. *Sing "Laudes":* Sing the seven Psalms of praise making up the service of the Church called Lauds.

48. *Salvâ,* etc.: the bidding to greet here with a reverence, according to custom, the Host, or Christ's flesh, which had been mentioned.

60. *Sharon's rose:* Solomon's Song ii. 1.

Holy-Cross Day reflects the attitude of the corrupt mediæval Christians and Jews toward each other. The prose preceding the poem gives the point of view of an imaginary Bishop's Secretary, who congratulates himself upon the good work the Church is doing in forcing its doctrine on the Jews in the Holy-Cross Day sermon, and effecting many conversions. The poem shows that the Jews regard this solicitude on the part of the Christians with hatred and scorn, and that their conversions are in derision of their would-be converters. The sarcasm of the speaker reaches a pinnacle of bitterness when he accuses the Christian bishops of being men he had helped to their sins and who now help him to their God. From scorn toward such followers of Christ, he passes, in the contemplation of Rabbi Ben Ezra's death song, to a defence of Christ against these followers who profess but do not act his precepts, and a hope that if the Jews were mistaken in not accepting Christ, the tortures they now suffer will be received as expiation for their sin.

Holy-Cross Day is September 14. The discovery of the true cross by Saint Helen inaugurated the festival, celebrated both by Latins and Greeks as early as the fifth or sixth century, under the title of the Exaltation

of the Cross and later in commemoration of the alleged miraculous appearance of the Cross to Constantine in the sky at midday. Though the particular incidents of the poem are not historical, it is a fact (see Milman's "History of the Jews") that, by a Papal Bull issued by Gregory XIII. in 1584, all Jews above the age of twelve years were compelled to listen every week to a sermon from a Christian priest.

52. *Corso:* a street in Rome.

67. *Rabbi Ben Ezra:* or Ibn Ezra, a mediæval Jewish writer and thinker, born in Toledo, near the end of the eleventh century.

111. *Ghetto:* the Jews' quarter. Pope Paul IV. first shut the Jews up in the Ghetto, and prohibited them from leaving it after sunset.

Protus sets in contrast the representations by artist and annalist of the two busts and the two lives of Protus, the baby emperor of Byzantium, born in the purple, gently nurtured and cherished, yet fated to obscurity, and of John, the blacksmith's bastard, predestined to usurp his throne and save the empire with his harder hand.

The Statue and the Bust creates the characters and the situation, and dramatically represents a story which is based on a Florentine tradition that Duke Ferdinand I. placed his equestrian statue in the Piazza dell' Annunziata so that he might gaze forever towards the old Riccardi Palace, where a lady he loved was imprisoned by her jealous husband. The bride and her ducal lover are seen exchanging their first looks, through which they perceive the genuineness of their love; and the temporizing of each is presented, through which, for the sake of petty conveniences, they submit to be thwarted by the wary husband, and to have the end they count supreme delayed until love and youth have gone, and the best left them is the artificial gaze interchanged by a bronze statue in the square and a clay face at the window. The closing stanzas point the

moral against the palsy of the will, whose strenuous exercise is life's main gift.

1. *There 's a palace in Florence:* refers to the old Riccardi Palace, now the Palazzo Antinori, in the square of the Annunziata, where the statue still stands.

33. *The pile which the mighty shadow makes:* refers to another palace in the Via Larga where the duke (*not* the lady) lived, and which is to-day known as the Riccardi Palace. Cooke's "Browning Guide Book" and Berdoe's "Browning Cyclopædia" both confuse the two, attributing error to Browning in spite of his letter about it. This confusion was cleared up by Harriet Ford (*Poet-lore*, Dec. 1891, vol. iii. p. 648, "Browning right about the Riccardi Palace").

36. *Because of a crime*, etc.: refers to the destroying of the liberties of the Florentine republic by Cosimo dei Medici and his grandson, Lorenzo, who lived in the then Medici (now Riccardi) Palace, whose darkening of the street with its bulk symbolizes the crime which took the light from Florence.

94. *Arno bowers:* the palace by the Arno, the river flowing through Florence.

95. *Petraja:* a Florentine suburb.

169. *Robbia's craft:* the Robbia family were skilled in shaping the bisque known as Della Robbia ware which was long one of the Florentine manufactures, and traces of which, when Browning wrote, still adorned the outer cornice of the palace.

202. *John of Douay*, sculptor (1524–1608). The statue is one of his finest works.

250. *De te, fabula!* Concerning thee, this fable!

Porphyria's Lover relates how, by strangling Porphyria with her own yellow hair, the lover seized and preserved the moment of perfect love when, pure and good, Porphyria left the world she could not forego for his sake, and came to him, for once conquered by her love. A latent misgiving as to his action is intimated in the closing line of the poem.

Remarking upon the fact that Browning removed the original title, "Madhouse Cells," which headed this poem, and "Johannes Agricola in Meditation," Mrs. Orr says: "Such a crime might be committed in a momentary aberration, or even intense excitement of feeling. It is characterized here by a matter-of-fact simplicity, which is its sign of madness. The distinction, however, is subtle; and we can easily guess why this and its companion poem did not retain their title. A madness which is fit for dramatic treatment is not sufficiently removed from sanity."

Childe Roland symbolizes the conquest of despair by fealty to the ideal. Browning emphatically disclaimed any precise allegorical intention in this poem. He acknowledged only an ideal purport in which the significance of the whole, as suggesting a vision of life and the saving power of constancy, had its due place. Certain picturesque materials which had made their impressions on the poet's mind contributed towards the building up of this realistic fantasy: a tower he saw in the Carrara Mountains; a painting which caught his eye later in Paris; the figure of a horse in the tapestry in his own drawing-room, — welded together with the remembrance of the line cited from "King Lear," iii. 4, 187, which last, it should be remembered, has a background of ballads and legend cycles of which a man like Browning was not unaware. For allegorical schemes of the Poem see Nettleship's "Essays and Thoughts," and *The Critic*, Apr. 24, 1886; for an antidote to these, *The Critic*, May 8, 1886; an orthodox view, *Poet-lore*, Nov. 1890: for interpretations touching on the ballad sources, London Browning Society Papers, part iii. p. 21, and *Poet-lore*, Aug.-Sept. 1892.

Christmas-Eve presents in a sort of mental phantasmagoria a series of thought-moods upon the basis of belief awakened by a visit to a dissenting chapel. First, an impulse of scorn at the unlovely aspect of the congregation and at what the poet considers the falsity

of the doctrine, which causes him seemingly to "fling out" of the chapel, though, as it appears later, he does so only in thought. Calmed by the idea of Nature's beauty, the next mood is one of reasoning, to the effect that, after all, the essential truths of religion were there in spite of the distasteful form in which they were presented; that, no doubt, truth is behind all the varying forms, more or less grotesque, which religion assumes. This leads him to the consideration of his own faith, which is based upon the power visible in Nature and the love made known in the human heart. Since there exists power so immeasurably superior to the utmost man can do, there must exist love just as immeasurably superior, which will answer to man's utmost need of love. At this point his mood changes to one of intuition or almost revelation, and he sees the vision of the rainbow, which probably symbolizes the various aspects of truth, as seen by different portions of humanity, all dissolving finally in the white light of absolute truth, upon which rests infinite love as incarnate in Christ. Then follows a series of visions in which are symbolized the fluctuations between the insight of intuition and the insight of reason. At the vision of High Mass at Saint Peter's, reason declares that infinite love doubtless can detect the spark of truth beneath these shows, but it were better for him, a man, to remain outside. Then intuition (symbolized all the time by Christ's garment) bids him enter and praise with them up to their point; for had they not dedicated their impulses of sense and their treasures of art, which the early Christians in their revolt against Paganism had scorned, to the worship and love of God? At the vision of the German lecture hall, reason again leaves him outside, and the professor's learning so disgusts him that he turns his back and indulges in an argument to prove the divinity of Christ. But intuition again suggests that even in this lecturer's point of view there is a ghost of the truth, because the professor at least venerates the beauty of

what he thinks he has proven a myth. Here (Stanza XIX.) he falls into a self-congratulatory mood over the pleasantness of his own spirit of toleration for all forms of religion; intuition warns him this is a dangerous attitude, the garment of Christ slips out of his hand, but is regained when his final conclusion is reached, namely, that the truth he has himself been regarding as absolute is, after all, only the truth to him, but as such must be strenuously followed by him, while that spirit of toleration in which he sees each man getting simply a glimpse of truth is lost in the larger love that recognizes every man's point of view as an absolute revelation for him, if not for any one else. He finds himself back again in the chapel in a more charitable mood than when he left it on his mental pilgrimage, though his philosophy and love combined cannot force his taste into any relish of the Dissenting, the Catholic, or the Professor's modes of arriving at truth.

46. *Lot . . . Gomorrah:* Genesis xix. 17, 30.

70. *Pattens:* clogs of wood standing on iron rings, worn to keep the feet dry.

73. *A lance in rest:* on the right side of an ancient coat-of-mail was a projection, called the rest, which supported the lance. Knights going into battle with the lance in rest presented a formidable front.

81. *Penitent Thief:* Luke xxiii. 40.

89. *Gallio:* "And Gallio cared for none of these things." Acts xviii. 12–17.

92. *Tallyho:* the huntsman's cry to urge on the hounds.

102. *Saint John's Candlestick:* Revelation i. 12, 20.

105. *Grand-Inquisitor:* Torquemada was the first Inquisitor-General of the Spanish Inquisition. He held the office from 1483 to his death in 1498, and during that time eighty-eight hundred people were burned alive.

107. *You are the men,* etc.: Job xii. 2.

108. *Seven Churches:* Revelation i. 20.

120. *Vestiment:* coined from the Latin form *vestimentum*, for "vestment." See Matthew xxii. 11 fol.

132. *Pentacle:* a six-pointed star formed by two equilateral triangles. It had a mystical significance in the astrology of the Middle Ages.

133. *Conventicle:* opprobriously applied to gatherings of dissenters.

135. *Christmas-Eve of 'Forty-nine:* Dr. Berdoe calls attention to the fact that Dissenters do not celebrate Christmas Eve, and would not be holding service unless it fell on Sunday. As a matter of fact, Christmas Eve fell on Monday in '49. This is a sufficient indication of the purely imaginary character of the experience.

143. *Pig-of-lead:* a *pig* is an oblong mass of crude metal as first extracted from the ore, weighing from fifty to two hundred pounds.

157. *In severance:* disconnected.

170. *Dew of Hermon:* Psalm cxxxiii. 3.

232. *Pharaoh:* Genesis xl. 16 fol.

238. *Joseph:* see his interpretation of Pharaoh's dream. Genesis xl. 18, 19.

509. *Cup . . . cold water:* Matthew x. 42.

529. *Dome of God:* dome of Saint Peter's cathedral in Rome.

530. *Angel's measuring-rod:* Revelation xxi. 15 fol.

562. *Basilica:* originally a king's palace, then a hall of justice, finally a church or cathedral.

573. *Baldachin:* a canopy over an altar supported by pillars.

578. *Behemoth:* Job xl. 15 fol.

579. *Silver bell,* etc.: in the Roman Catholic ceremony of the elevation of the Host (sacrament), a bell is rung, when the people all fall on their knees.

595. *I died,* etc.: Revelation i. 18.

652. *The antique sovereign Intellect:* refers to the intellectual ascendency of the ancient Classic culture.

663. *Scrawled, . . . leaving Sallust incomplete:* the early Christians wrote their religious works on leaves

torn from ancient manuscripts after they had erased the ink. Sallust, the Roman historian (86–35 B. C.) so suffered, according to Browning. As his histories have come to us only in fragments, the supposition is not improbable.

672. *Christian Art:* occupied itself with depicting moral aspiration rather than with beauty of form.

674. *Terpander's bird:* the nightingale. Terpander is called the father of Greek music, on account of the improvements he is recorded to have introduced in it. (About 670 B. C.)

680. *Aphrodite:* Greek goddess of Love.

793. *Göttingen:* a celebrated University of Germany from which have come many eminent Biblical critics.

834. *Hake:* a bunch.

839. *Some thrilling view of the surplice-question:* refers to discussions upon the distinctions between High Church and Low Church in England.

962. *When A got leave an Ox to be,* etc.: in Hebrew the letter A was represented by an ox, the initial letter of the Hebrew word for ox being A (*Aleph*), similarly with G, *Gimel,* a camel.

973. *Harvey:* discoverer of the circulation of the blood (1578–1657).

1003. *Euclid:* celebrated mathematician of Alexandria (about 300 B. C.).

1078. *Levigable:* capable of being reduced to fine powder.

1101. *Middle Verb:* the reflexive form of the verb.

1103. *Anapæsts in comic-trimeter:* the anapæst (foot of three syllables, accent on last) is an unusual foot in trimeter, verse of three feet.

1104. *Iketides:* The Suppliants, a tragedy of Æschylus, which has come down in a mutilated condition.

1107. *Titus . . . Philemon:* books in the New Testament.

1115. *Herr Heine before his fever:* up in 1848 Heine, the celebrated German poet, lived a life of wild dissi-

pation. Then he was very ill, lost his sight, and never regained his health. After this he renounced his infidelity.

1120. *Meticulous:* fearful, timid.

1242. *Raree-show:* peep show. The word perpetuates a mispronunciation of "rare."

1268. *Pascal:* celebrated French philosopher (1623–1662).

1292. *Breccia:* stone made up of various mineral fragments stuck together and presenting variegated colors.

1326. *Bourbon bully's gloatings:* this is probably Ferdinand II. of Naples and Sicily, who was christened King Bomba. He was fiercely opposed to the Italian liberals and to Pope Pius IX. for his concessions to them, and hesitated at no injustice or cruelty against the sympathizers with the liberals or the Pope. (See "Pius IX., The Story of his Life," by Alfred Owen Legge.)

Easter-Day inquires how the evolving finite life of man may be rightly related to the belief in the supremacy of the infinite life, the inquiry being carried on by means of a dialogue. The first speaker is unsatisfied with the successive points of view suggested by the second speaker: of martyrdom in this life for the sake of eternal joy; of God as needing to test his friends and foes, or as being one with Law, or as revealed in Nature, or as a probability deducible from the devotion or religiousness of which the human heart is capable. The modern demand should be, he says, a confident trust rather than a self-delusion, and this must be reconcilable with God's unmistakable requirement to account this world's gain for loss, although it is man's only fact to hold to. He offers, then, a personal experience, imaginatively conceived, wherein he represents himself at the Judgment Day as choosing the finite life instead of the infinite, only to learn that there is nothing in it except as it is related with the infinite

life. The vista opened out toward the infinite by love is that which gives the light of life to all the good things of earth which he desired, — the beauty of Nature and Art, and the joy of intellectual activity. In man's present perception, then, of the infinite, through the finite, his belief in the supremacy of the infinite life rests.

91. *In . . . God's acts . . . he should geometrize:* in Plato's Dialogue, "Timæus," God's creation of the universe is conceived as a geometrizing process, the soul having the form, most perfect, of the circle, the earth being a cube, fire a pyramid, the air an octahedron, and so on; and Diogenianas in Plutarch's "Symposiacs," viii. 2, cites Plato as saying "God always plays the geometer."

154. *Coleoptera:* the order of insects with wings in a hard case, *e. g.* the beetles.

160. *A Grignon with the Regent's crest:* a snuff-box made by the French metal-worker Pierre Grignon (1723–1784) bearing the crest of the Duke of Orleans, regent for Louis XV.

169. *A Semitic guess:* a theory on a subject puzzling to philologists, the Semitic or Hebrew group of languages.

180. *Jonah's whale translatable:* less literal versions of Jonah, chapters i. and ii.

193. *Orpheus:* son of Apollo and Calliope, the muse of poetry, a type of divinity in musical emotion and expression.

194. *Dionysius Zagrias:* Bacchus, son of Zeus and Semele, the daughter of the Greek Adam, Cadmus. He was not merely god of the vine, but of the mystical energy of Nature pulsing each spring in the new sap. Under his name, Zagrias, he was also the Sufferer, giving his blood that there might be life, in which subtler form he approached the Christ-idea, and is cited here as an evidence of the divine revelation in the human heart.

330. *Leave Saint Paul for Æschylus:* Leave the certainty of Paul in chapter xv. 1 Corinthians, for the blind hope the Greek poet says the Titan, Prometheus, gave man, "Prometheus Bound," line 255.

393. *The Lucumons:* Patriarchs of Etrurian houses, from the word *Lucumo*, meaning "chief," and the first name of the elder of the Tarquin kings of Rome, Lucumo Tarquinius Priscus.

394. *Fourier's scheme:* a plan of living in communities based on the socialistic philosophy of François Fourier (1772–1837).

447. *'Tice:* an Elizabethan form of "entice."

476. *At night . . . like a thief:* 2 Peter iii. 10.

488. *Queen Mab:* a creature of dream and fairy land (see "Romeo and Juliet," i. 4, 52) here associated with other mediæval fancies called up by the conception of waking from life as if it were a dream.

598. *Tophet:* Isaiah xxx. 33.

615. *The great white throne:* Revelation xx. 11.

640. *The smoke pillared o'er Sodom:* Genesis xix. 28.

681. *Flesh refine to nerve:* see, on the evolution of the nervous system, Herbert Spencer's "Psychology," p. 9, § 5.

712. *The unjust . . . the filthy:* Revelation xxi. 11.

749. *Bee-bird and . . . aloe-flower:* the humming-bird, *colubri*, of the tropics, formerly supposed to feed only on honey, the buzzing of whose swift tiny wings is like the hum of the bee, and the night-blooming aloe that dies at cock-crow, cited here as rare wonders of bird and plant-life.

788. *That perfection . . . only hinted at:* see, also, Marlowe's "I. Tamburlaine," v. 1. 160–172.

799. *Buonarroti:* Michel Agnolo Buonarroti, the creative giant among artists (1475–1564).